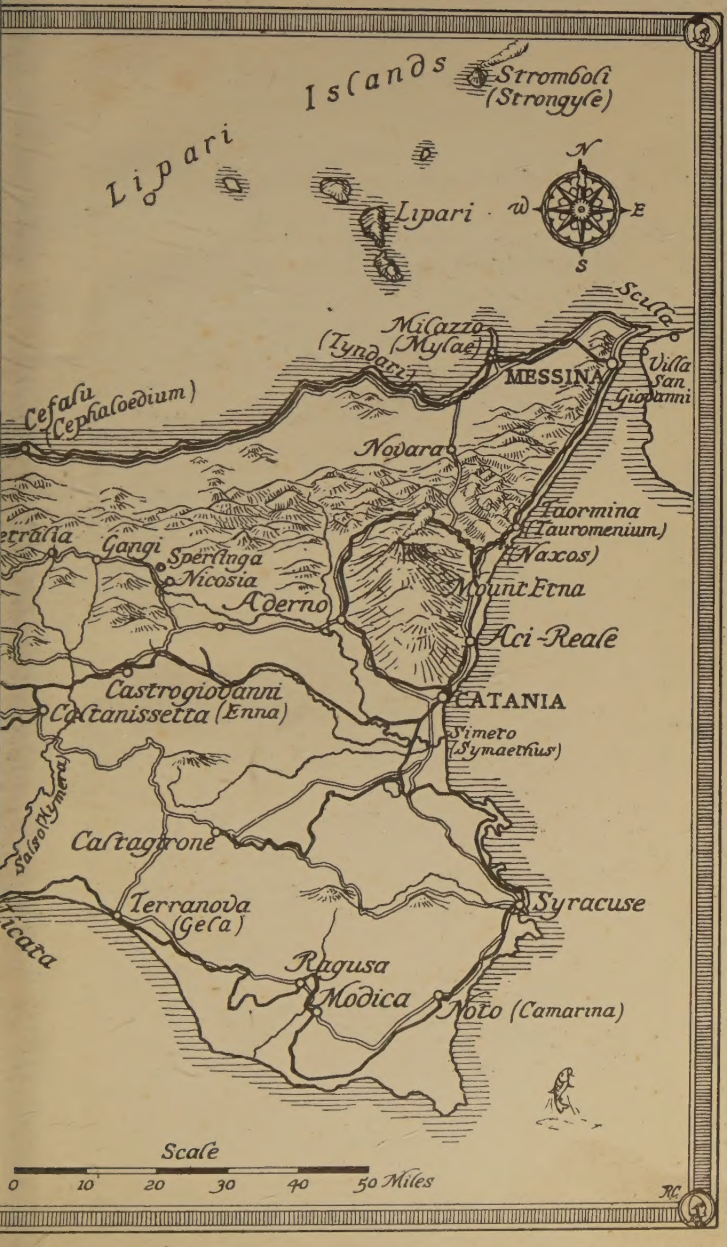


SKETCH MAP OF SICILY





SICILY PRESENT AND PAST

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

GREECE OLD AND NEW

(*Demy 8vo*)



TEMPLE OF CERES, SEGESTA

SICILY PRESENT AND PAST

BY
ASHLEY BROWN

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS
AND TWO MAPS



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PREFACE

NO one who knows Sicily will dispute that it is one of the most fascinating lands in Europe. I doubt if there is any country in the world that includes within comparatively so small an area so much beauty and romance.

But although it may be true that the beauty of the island is immediately apparent, it is not less the case that what is seen is deprived of a great part of its romance—and consequently of its appeal—if the visitor is unfamiliar with the history of the site.

Part I of this book, therefore, will be found to deal with places and monuments as we find them to-day, whilst Part II is designed to explain how these places and monuments came to be what they are.

So far as was possible, Part II has been made to run chronologically and to keep pace with the corresponding chapters of Part I. Thus in Part II the Fall of Selinus (Chapter IV) precedes the Fall of Acragas (Chapter V)—as it did in fact—and both find their modern complement in Chapters IV and V of Part I which deal with Selinunte and Girgenti as they exist at present. The intention can perhaps best be explained by saying that Part II should be read en route, in the hotel or the train, whilst Part I should be referred to on the spot.

Finally, the index is unusually complete, my intention throughout being to make this work as useful as possible. In this respect, amongst others, I am indebted to the publishers who have similarly spared no pains to meet the convenience of the traveller.

ASHLEY BROWN

January 1928

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**Photographs : Galifi Crupi.*

Except where otherwise acknowledged, the illustrations are from the photographs by Alinari

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SICILY PRESENT AND PAST

PART I

CHAPTER I

TRAVEL IN SICILY

OF the fascination which Sicily exerts over all who visit it, it is scarcely necessary to speak—few areas richer in historical association or more perfect in beauty and in climate are to be found anywhere in the world. The season proper runs from February to April but, as I have pointed out elsewhere, many of the hotels are open from October to May and there is really no reason beyond custom why the English season should not continue throughout the full seven months. During the summer months the climate of the island is hotter than an Englishman is accustomed to, but there are many spots in the island, of which Palermo would be one, at which even the summer could be passed with pleasure. However, from October to May the Sicilian climate is everything the visitor can desire, the average temperature at Palermo in January being about 52° and in the south of the island several degrees higher. As elsewhere in the south of Europe during the winter months, it is necessary to remember that a warm day may be followed by a cool evening and a cold night.

It will probably come as a surprise to the reader that Sicily accounts for more than *a tenth* of the total population of Italy. None the less this is the case. The total population of Sicily is now reckoned at 4,224,160, a figure which is to be accounted for by the unusually large families everywhere to be met with. As a matter of fact families of twelve or more are quite frequent. The largest town of the island is, as would be anticipated, Palermo, with a population of 420,000. Catania follows with 255,391, Messina

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with 176,794 is third in the list. It may be of interest to give the figures for some of the better-known of the remaining towns in order of size—Marsala 76,000; Alcamo 73,000; Trapani 71,000; Modica 61,000; Caltanissetta 60,000; Syracuse 50,027; Girgenti 30,074; and Taormina 5,300. To the tourist, however, these details possess only a passing interest.

From the point of view of the motorist, Sicily is only just coming into its own. Many of the roads may be described as fairly good and some few as excellent, and every month that passes adds to the mileage which the touring car may complete with comfort and safety. At present the interior of the island is not visited to any great extent but those who bring their cars will find that it is quite possible to make excursions into the interior by day and to return to one or other of the better-known hotels at nightfall. In every direction roads are being adapted to motor traffic and reasonably good hotels may now be met with in places previously entirely off the beaten track. The opening of the Hotel Selinus at Castelvetro, for instance, provides a much needed starting point for a visit to the ruins of Selinunte. At Castrogiovanni again, the recently modernised Hotel Belvedere is beautifully situated and a pleasant spot at which to break the journey from Catania to Girgenti. There are in fact now a number of towns off the normal tourist route such as Trapani, Castelvetro, Castrogiovanni, Aci-Reale and Tindari, at which the motorist can stop the night without the slightest discomfort.

Travellers visiting the interior in their cars should procure the road map of the Touring Club Italiano (*Atlante Stradale d'Italia del Touring Club Italiano, Fascicolo per la Sicilia*. Representative in Great Britain, 16, Waterloo Place, Regent Street.) The excursion from Palermo to Segesta via Monreale returning via Partinico and thence along the coast, and from Palermo to Taormina through the Madonian mountains, passing Petralia, Gangi, Sperlinga and Nicosia are particularly worth making. Other runs which will be almost equally appreciated are those from Taormina to

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Tindari via Novara and from Palermo to Trapani and Monte San Giuliano. Not everybody, however is able to take a car to Sicily, and time, again, is frequently a factor of importance when a visit to the island is being planned. For this reason I hasten to point out that the most fascinating spots in the island are quite accessible in a variety of ways and that the tourist who desires to visit any of the historical or most beautiful towns in Sicily will find everything made easy for him.

The towns which should not on any account be missed are Syracuse, Taormina, Girgenti and Palermo. If desired a visit to Messina can also be made quite pleasantly. In all these towns excellent hotel accommodation is available and travelling between one point and another is, in my opinion, quite comfortable. I say 'in my opinion' because no two standards of comfort are precisely the same and I have read many harsh remarks about the Sicilian railways. None the less, with the exception of the journey between Syracuse or Taormina and Girgenti it is an easy matter to find a train with a restaurant car attached, and if the journey is slow the rolling stock is fairly modern.

For those who prefer travel by road, A.S.T.I.S.¹ in conjunction with that enterprising Tourist Association the C.I.T.² provide a service of six-seated motor cars which make a circuit of the island in seven days. It is possible for a remarkably moderate sum to visit in this fashion practically every place the tourist will desire to see.

For those whose time is limited and who find it necessary to map out a programme in advance this method of seeing Sicily has many points in its favour. But except at Syracuse the time allowed even at the most interesting centres is necessarily very short and the tourist availing himself of this service will be well advised, if he can afford a few extra days, to break his journey now and again and to proceed by the next car two or three days later.

A really satisfactory holiday in Sicily would allow at least

¹ Associazione per lo Sviluppo del Turismo in Sicilia.

² C.I.T.: Compagnia Italiana del Turismo, and Italian State Railways (Italian State Tourist Department).

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eight days in Palermo, two at Girgenti, three at Taormina and two at Syracuse. But these figures are necessarily arbitrary and are intended rather to suggest the apportionment of time than a minimum or a limit. It is advisable to allow for a longer stay at Palermo than elsewhere in the island as Palermo has not only a great deal to offer of itself but is a centre of importance from which expeditions will be made to such places as Segesta, Selinunte and Cefalu.

Unquestionably the easiest and most enjoyable route to Sicily is by sleeping car to Genoa, one night in the train, and thence by the Sitmar Line to Syracuse, Catania or Messina. The 'Esperia' and her sister ship the new 'Ausonia' which sail every week in the Egypt service of this company are, I imagine, very easily the most luxurious vessels of their type to be found in Mediterranean waters. Leaving Genoa at 3 p.m. the steamer reaches Naples at 11 a.m. of the following day, sails at 5 p.m. and arrives at Syracuse the following morning at 7.30 o'clock.¹

The magnificent view of the Gulf of Naples which this route affords and the short stay in Naples itself make the journey very attractive. Perhaps I should add that the steamer passes the islands of Monte Cristo and Elba, islands that have made fiction as famous as fact and fact as romantic as fiction and that this all too brief voyage affords the unique experience of a sight of three volcanoes, Vesuvius, Stromboli and Etna, within the space of a few hours. The sea passage is almost invariably a good one and the size and sea-going qualities of these vessels are such that I can recommend this route, even to a bad sailor, with a clear conscience. The 'Esperia' is a veritable floating 'Hotel de Luxe', and, as her sister ship will resemble her in this respect, it can be said with accuracy that there is now a service from Genoa to Sicily quite as luxurious and infinitely more enjoyable than that between Southampton and New York.

The steamers of the same Company sailing to Catania and

¹ Sailing times are necessarily altered from time to time, and this information is only intended to indicate the length of the trip. Before making definite arrangements the reader should consult the London office of the Company.

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Messina are fine vessels which I believe were constructed for the North Atlantic Service. I am told they are very steady and extremely comfortable boats and I can well believe it, but as I have not personally travelled in them I will not say more than that they constitute a valuable subsidiary service well patronised by English people. As a matter of fact I was told in Syracuse that about 80 per cent of the passengers by the Sitmar Line are British subjects. The percentage is surprising but I am bound to say that it was supported by the passenger list of the 'Esperia' when I crossed on her.

The alternative routes, which I have also sampled, are two in number. The tourist may take the train down the Italian coast through Rome to Naples and take steamer thence to Palermo, or he may make the entire journey by rail.

It is now possible to book seats in advance in most Italian expresses and so far as my experience goes, especially between Genoa and Rome, it is advisable to do so. I will not say more about the Palermo-Naples route than that it involves in any event a change of trains at Rome and that the steamers between Naples and Palermo, of about 3,000 to 4,000 tons gross, although in no way comparable to the 'Esperia' or 'Ausonia' are quite comfortable vessels of their kind.¹

The advantage of the all-rail route is that the traveller can enter his sleeping car in Rome and remain in it until he reaches Taormina, Syracuse or Palermo, the train crossing the Straits of Messina on a train ferry. I am not one who dislikes travel by rail. Indeed after a considerable amount of travel in one country or another I am strongly of the opinion that it is possible to see more beautiful scenery from the window of a railway carriage than from a motor car. However, a great part of the journey from Naples to Palermo or Taormina is performed at night, and railway tracks in the south of Italy are not at present of the same high standard as obtains in the north.

The rates for sleeping car accommodation within Italy are considerably less than the rates charged upon trains in France in which the clientele is mostly British. The sleeping

¹ Since these lines were written an air service has been inaugurated between Genoa (dep. 7.45) and Palermo (arr. 17.15).

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car is of course a great convenience and within Italy it is sometimes less expensive to travel straight through to one's destination in a "sleeper" than to break the journey en route and incur a hotel bill for one night.

Returning from Sicily during the season it is advisable to book sleeping berths well in advance as it is sometimes the case, especially at Taormina, that they are not to be had a week or so before the desired date. Everything considered, however, I am inclined to suggest the Sitmar Line from Genoa to Syracuse and rail or car thence to Palermo via Taormina and Girgenti, the return journey being made by steamer from Palermo to Naples.

It may be advisable at this stage to point out that it is more economical to take tickets (covering the entire trip out and home again) in London than to book to Palermo or Syracuse and to take further tickets locally. The latter method has something to commend it from the point of view of the traveller to whom any cast iron programme is anathema. I found, however in my own case, that I was paying precisely 50 per cent more for every ticket that I took in Sicily than I should have done had I booked in London, the explanation being that during certain months of the year (usually the 1st of March to the 15th July) a deduction of 50 per cent is made in the cost of all return tickets by direct route, as from the Italian frontier to destination.

With these tickets an identity card ('Tessera') is provided, at a charge of five shillings, on production of which the holder can obtain in Sicily single and return tickets to any destination on the island at a similar reduction of 50 per cent. This concession is extremely useful to the tourist who purposes to make extensive use of the Sicilian railways.

Although somewhat foreign to the subject of this book, I may remark parenthetically that it is a simple matter to combine a tour through Sicily with a visit to Malta, Tunis and the rising winter resort of Tripoli. Direct communication exists between Palermo and Tunis, involving a little more than one night at sea and from Syracuse to Malta and Tripoli, again an easy journey. As I have said, this matter

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scarcely falls within the scope of this volume although the reference may be pardoned as emphasising the comparatively close proximity of Sicily to the African sea-board, a fact frequently overlooked.

The passport system in Sicily does not cause any particular trouble although the Italian passport regulations are now somewhat stringent. None the less the passport must be produced at practically every hotel visited.

Local excursions can be arranged either with the hotel concierge or through the local office of C.I.T. I am inclined to suggest to the tourist to secure a quotation from both sources before coming to a decision as at least in one instance I found it possible to secure a car through my hotel at a cheaper rate than from the local tourist agency. This should not be the case, and I am hopeful that C.I.T. who have done so much for the benefit of Sicily will look into the matter now that their attention has been directed to it.

The local drivers, so far as my experience goes, are extremely proficient, although as is generally the case on the Continent, they strike the visitor as unnaturally daring. However, accidents are rare, and a driver recommended by a good hotel or C.I.T. may be implicitly trusted.

The following table will assist the reader to estimate roughly the cost of excursions by motor from the chief centres of the island. The average charge per kilometre is about four lire and the cars usually hold four or five persons. Empty running is usually charged at the same rate, although during the season, when passengers are more numerous and a return fare becomes a possibility, it is sometimes possible to strike a bargain.

DISTANCES, IN KILOMETRES

1.	Palermo—Segesta—Selinunte	-	-	-	Km. 150
2.	„ —Girgenti	-	-	-	„ 160
3.	„ —Segesta—Selinunte—Girgenti	-	-	-	„ 232
4.	„ —Nicosia—Taormina	-	-	-	„ 315
5.	„ —Termini—Cefalu—Tindari—Messina	-	-	-	„ 255
6.	Messina—Taormina	-	-	-	„ 54
7.	„ —Taormina—Catania	-	-	-	„ 100
8.	„ —Taormina—Catania—Syracuse	-	-	-	„ 166

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9.	Taormina—Catania	- - - - -	Km. 46
10.	„ —Linguaglossa—Randazzo—Biancavilla—Syracuse	- - -	„ 107
11.	Catania—Nicolosi—Monti Rossi—Pedara—Catania	- - - - -	„ 40
12.	„ —Trecastagni—Fleri—Zafferana-	-	„ 60
13.	Syracuse—Catania—Biancavilla—Randazzo—Taormina—Messina	- - -	„ 207
14.	„ —Catlagirone—Caltanissetta—Girgenti	-	„ 270
15.	Girgenti—Sciacca—Selinunte—Castelvetrano—Segesta	- - - - -	„ 175

While on the subject of travel within Italy I may say that it is emphatically my opinion based upon a fairly extensive experience of Italian Hotels that the present system by which the 10 per cent Service Tax is substituted for the old-fashioned tip is frequently unfair to the tourist. I have recently seen letters in *The Times* in which correspondents state that tips are no longer looked for in Italy. That, however, is not my experience.

Where the intention of the tax is recognised there is something to be said for it as a matter of convenience. But I do not agree that tips should be appropriated as a matter of right. Tips are, or should be, a personal acknowledgment of small attentions which lie outside the dull routine of duty. It was upon such service, in days fast passing, the experienced traveller relied for his comfort and since he expected, and secured, more than his fellows, it was right that he should pay for it. But this tax reduces everyone to the same level, entitles all of us to nothing at all and leaves the exacting traveller precisely where he was before it was invented. For my part I now make it a rule to refuse tips in Italy and it is much to be desired that other English travellers should act similarly. It should be remembered that the 10 per cent tax was instituted by Mussolini with the definite intention to abolish 'tipping' and foreigners should make it a duty to see that this intention is realised.

A few notes, which I extract from my diary, on the subject of Sicilian wines may be of interest to those who are

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not familiar with such matters. The outstanding Sicilian wines are Marsala, the table wines of the Etna region in the province of Catania, the sweet 'Moscato' of the province of Syracuse, the sweet 'Zucco' of the province of Palermo and the 'Malvasia' of Lipari. The chief wine-producing province is Catania; Trapani, Messina and Palermo following in the order given. Of the wines exported, Marsala is, of course, easily most in demand.

Marsala wine is produced at the town from which it takes its name, the leading producers being the two British firms of Woodhouse & Co., I believe the original founders of the industry, and Ingham Whitaker & Co., and the Italian firm of Florio & Co. The wines obtainable throughout the province of Trapani are of the Marsala type, of a rich yellow colour and inclined to be strong.

The wines of the Etna region, red and white, make pleasant table wines. The sweet 'Moscato' and 'Zucco' are popular with ladies and possess strong grape flavour. The 'Malvasia' of Lipari is a strong, rich wine, darker in colour than Marsala, which it resembles in being a dessert rather than a table wine. A passable table wine which I recommend for all ordinary purposes is 'Corvo', red or white, produced by the Duca di Salaparuta of Palermo.

Finally it may be desirable to remove a few misconceptions regarding mythical brigands and the ramifications of Mafia. Brigandage is now fortunately a thing of the past. The present Government in Italy is not one that can be defied with impunity, and in any event Sicily in these days is well policed. Even in remote parts of the island it is possible to meet not only the well-known Carabinieri in their long, blue cloaks, armed with swords and revolvers but even detachments of infantry and cavalry. Two of my friends were recently afforded personal proof of the vigilance of the authorities. One of them returning in the small hours of the morning from a dinner at a friend's house, was stopped by police in the streets of Palermo and closely questioned as to who he was and how he happened to be out so late. The other, unfortunately missed a train at a particularly uninteresting spot in the interior of the Island. It was some

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hours before another train was due and a couple of soldiers soon made their appearance and desired to know how it was that he found himself in such a place at such a time. My friend explained that he had stopped at this town in order to see what it was like, and that he was waiting on the station because he had missed his train. The soldiers, however, were far from satisfied. They said this precise spot was so ugly that no man in his senses would ever get out there unless he had some particular business to discharge, an argument that could be used with great force by our own police in Manchester and elsewhere. To cut a long story short, my friend only escaped a visit to the local Gendarmerie by showing his passport, an action which persuaded his captors that he was nothing worse than a respectable lunatic.

In Sicily, as in Greece, the chief difficulty that the authorities had to contend with was the sympathy which the brigands always commanded amongst the villagers. However, thanks to the spread of education, to the increase in the police force, and, not least, to the more efficient conduct of affairs by the Government, brigands are now a thing of the past in Sicily.

As regards Mafia, the case is somewhat different, for Mafia is less an organisation than an attitude of mind. Until quite recent days, most Sicilians were by temperament sympathetic to what was in effect a lawless substitute for unjust law. Mafia, in short, was the Sicilian reply to alien oppression. There was no Sicilian who was without his grievance, and Mafia flourished throughout the island like some wild plant. In its early days its strength lay in the universal distrust of the law and of the Government that stood at the back of the law, in more recent times its essential viciousness was to be found in the extent to which it was exploited by criminals of all sorts.

Thus murders originally perpetrated to revenge an injustice, became, as it were, a commonplace of existence, and a criminal actuated by the basest of motives would be protected with a loyalty that had become a part of the very character of the people. It is difficult to exaggerate the abominations to which this state of affairs gave rise. No

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man in a position of authority could afford to refuse blackmail. No owner of property could consider himself safe. At any moment he might be required to appoint as bailiff of his estate some man utterly unknown to him, who, within an incredibly short space of time, would become the virtual owner of the property. I have heard of men who considered themselves fortunate when granted by such a bailiff a bare living from an estate of considerable wealth.

The ramifications of Mafia were almost incredible. It rarely happened that an Italian Government did not include one or more individuals who were badly compromised. Thus, even when a local administrator dared to set the law in motion, it was more than probable that the criminal would make his escape. It should not be supposed, however, that a Mafioso was necessarily a thief or an assassin—on the contrary it is probable that throughout its history Mafia included far more honest men than rogues. The danger lay in the fact that the movement gave the rogue a free hand, and put the honest man under the obligation to protect him. Whilst it would be a mistake to say that Mafia is dead, it is certain that its final disappearance cannot now be long delayed. Mafia was never a menace to the foreigner content to leave Sicilian affairs to the Sicilian, and to-day it is so insignificant a factor in Sicilian life that the foreigner will most probably never see or hear of it. A new and healthier plant is springing up in this rich soil and since Fascismo and Mafia cannot flourish side by side, it happens that whilst the newcomer gains daily in strength and brilliance, Mafia withers and decays.

CHAPTER II

SYRACUSE

ORTYGIA—FOUNTAIN OF ARETHUSA—CATHEDRAL (TEMPLE OF ATHENA) — TEMPLE OF APOLLO — ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM — THE LATOMIE — GREEK THEATRE — ROMAN AMPHITHEATRE—THE CATACOMBS OF S. GIOVANNI—TEMPLE OF OLYMPIAN ZEUS—FOUNTAIN OF CYANE—FORTRESS OF EURYALUS

THE visitor arriving in Syracuse will be well advised to remember that the city from the earliest times has comprised much more than the island of Ortygia. Indeed the sites to which he will desire to devote the most time lie on the high land to the north-west of the island and for this reason it is advantageous to choose an hotel in that quarter. The Politi, the luxe hotel, and the Villa Maria, less expensive but quite comfortable, are for this reason preferable in my opinion, to the hotels overlooking the harbour itself. The walk from either of these hotels to Ortygia is a simple one and a considerable saving in distance can be effected if, in preference to the carriage road which now connects the island with the mainland, the tourist makes his way to the small harbour and takes the ferry. The ferry, we should explain, takes the form of a continuous service of row boats, five or six of which are always to be seen in transit or awaiting passengers. The fare from the mainland to Ortygia, or vice versa is, or was recently, 20 centesimi for each person.

It is not without interest that this is probably the spot at which the first mole between the island and the mainland was constructed in the sixth or seventh century B.C. If this was so, then in olden times the Small Harbour was no more than an annex, so to speak, of the Great Harbour—a very convenient arrangement from the point of view of naval defence. The present connection has, of course, an entirely contrary effect, shutting off the Small Harbour from the Great Harbour but permitting direct ingress from the sea.

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Ortygia.—Ortygia is a quaint place in many ways, although its possibilities are soon exhausted. Here and there, however may be seen an ancient house with a frontage that immediately arrests the eye or some more modern structure with a delightful courtyard. These courtyards should never be entirely ignored since they sometimes contain old sculptured staircases or doorways of a type not to be met with in modern cities. After a first and attractive walk past the port and the Fountain of Arethusa to the Castello Maniace at the extremity of the island, the tourist will probably return to examine in greater detail some of the sights of the town.

The Castello Maniace was erected by the Emperor Frederic about A.D. 1239 upon the site of the original Greek fortress of which traces still remain. The existing structure is described as 'combining graceful strength with exquisite elegance'. The influence of the French engineers and stonemasons is to be discerned by those who understand such matters.

Fountain of Arethusa.—The Fountain of Arethusa is to-day considerably more attractive than it was a few years ago. The adjacent garden is well kept and in the Fountain itself, which in effect is a large walled-in pool, may be seen many fish and the rare papyrus plant. In days gone by native women were in the habit of wading into this pool in order to procure the sacred water which they sold to visitors for a small sum. Even to-day in the local mind a certain mystery surrounds the spring which keeps the pool fresh and sweet.

On the farther side of the sea wall may be seen the opening at which the pool, as the result of an earthquake, now communicates with the sea.

There is more than one version of the legend that gave its name to the fountain. According to Pausanias, Alpheus was a hunter and enamoured of Arethusa who hunted with him. 'And as Arethusa was unwilling to marry him she crossed over they say to an island near Syracuse, called Ortygia, and there became a spring; just as Alpheus in consequence of his love was changed into a river.'

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The tale as told by Ovid is a pretty one. Arethusa was a nymph of Archaia who bathing one day in a river of Arcadia was surprised by Alpheus the River God. Swiftly the nymph fled from the pursuer. Unhappily, however, in her haste she had taken the opposite bank to that upon which she had left her clothes and the sight of her body darting before him greatly inflamed the amorous River God. In this extremity Arethusa appealed to Diana—‘Give aid Diana, to thy Armour Bearer ere I am overtaken; I to whom thou hast so often entrusted thy bow and thy darts enclosed in the quiver.’

The Goddess was moved and taking a dense cloud she threw it over the nymph. But the River God, who for the moment had assumed mortal shape, ran about the cloud on all sides and seeing that no footsteps led from out the darkness, waited expectantly.

Then it was that the body of the nymph was dissolved in cold perspiration, in which indeed it rapidly melted until Arethusa had changed into a stream. Nonetheless the River God recognised in these strange waters the object of his love and, laying aside the shape of a mortal, he became once more a river and so mingled his own waters with those of the nymph. Thereupon Diana clove the ground and Arethusa, now a stream, was carried through dark caverns to Ortygia (a spot dear to her as one called after the name sometimes bestowed upon Diana) and here at Ortygia she regained the upper air.

The Cathedral.—It is a curious thought that almost the sole interest which the cathedral has for us lies in the fact that it contains some of the columns of what was probably the great Temple of Athena. It is not certain when this temple was erected, the date usually suggested being somewhere after 440 B.C.

There were thirty-six columns in the great Doric edifice. The cathedral was built in A.D. 640, but was greatly damaged by the earthquake of 1693 and subsequently restored.

The nave and choir occupy what was the cella of the temple, the space between the ancient columns was filled



TEMPLE OF APOLLO

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in (except where two side chapels were erected) the whole was roofed over and a chancel added. In the case of the chapels, the columns on either side of the entrance were slightly cut away to give sufficient width.

The appearance of these ancient columns in this setting is very curious, but not more so than those of the left-hand side of the church viewed from the side street, for here may be seen the ancient stone foundation upon which these great columns rest.

‘It will be noticed,’ says Mr. Freshfield, ‘that the semi-circular apse in the north aisle is built up between the pillar that stood at the north-east corner and the second pillar of the east front of the temple, and if the contour line be prolonged, it will be seen that the temple ended about midway down the present choir. The footings of the eastern extremity of the cella were found under the steps of the bishop’s throne, so that the present nave corresponds roughly with the cella.’

The church as we see it, however, is largely Norman and by no means the structure originally built into the temple. There can indeed be few sacred edifices with a more varied history. Apart altogether from any religious use to which the site was put before the erection of the Temple of Athena—for as often as not the Greek temples merely appropriated sites originally sacred to earlier cults—we have here the remains of the ancient Greek structure, the early Christian church built into it by Bishop Zosimus, the touch of the Saracens who captured Syracuse in A.D. 887 and converted the church into a mosque—their battlements may still be seen on the north side—and finally the work of the Normans who rebuilt the Christian church.

The church of to-day gives us unfortunately no idea whatever of the riches and grandeur of the temple which it superseded, neither for that matter does it in any way fill the same place in the fame of the city. For the temple of Athena at Syracuse was known far and wide throughout the then civilised world. It stood upon the highest ground in Ortygia, and a statue of the Goddess, holding aloft her golden shield, adorned the pediment. Thus it was that the

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glint of the sun upon the shield was probably the first welcome accorded to the returning mariner. Similarly, when ships put out to sea, votive offerings were thrown overboard as the shield faded from sight, for at that moment the seamen knew that he had passed the limits of his home.

While it is clear from references made to this temple by Cicero and Atheneus that the building was one of the greatest beauty and wealth, we nowhere find a detailed statement from which we can mentally reconstruct it. Cicero tells us that Marcellus did not touch this temple but left it full of treasures and ornaments which Verres carried off. Amongst the works of art mentioned in this connection there was: ' . . . a cavalry battle of their king Agathocles exquisitely painted in a series of pictures. With these pictures the inside walls of the temple were covered.'

The building appears to have been completed to the last detail with extraordinary luxury. Speaking of the temple doors, Cicero tells us, 'no more magnificent doors, none more beautifully wrought of gold and ivory, ever existed in any temple'. On these doors were 'Subjects most minutely executed in ivory'. The door knobs were of gold and were both numerous and heavy.

The Archaeological Museum.—The Archaeological Museum which confronts the cathedral contains the most complete collection of articles of archaeological interest within the island, but except for the Roman Statue of Aphrodite Anadyomene which was discovered in the Bonavia garden by Landolina in 1804, there is little here that appeals upon its own merits. The exception, however, is a notable one. The left hand of the Goddess clasps the bath robe about her figure, the right arm, now unfortunately missing, was once bent across the breast.

'Of all the celebrated representations of the Goddess of Love,' says Gregorovius, 'that of Milo, of Capua, of the Capitol, of Florence, the Venus of Syracuse is the least distinguished by charm, the most by the full development of feminine beauty.'

The description is apt, yet it misses something. Guy de Maupassant, I think, comes nearer to the truth: 'Le marbre

est vivant. On le voudrait palper, avec la certitude qu'il cédera sous la main, comme de la chair . . . C'est un corps de femme qui exprime toute la poésie réelle de la caresse.'

Mr. Hutton after quoting Maupassant at some length remarks that : ' All this seems quite true and quite obvious and rather boring, like the statue, which may explain much in late manners that is difficult to understand ; it certainly explains one's preference for the older, the archaic Greek Art . . . Does it not mean that this statue is so realistic that it has almost ceased to be a work of art ? '

But what standard of female beauty can there be other than that based upon man's own instincts ? It is a hard saying that we should value in art only those figures which we should ignore in life. Surely there must be some fundamental truth linking art to reality otherwise what permanence can there be in the standards by which we judge it ?

But these problems the reader, staring at the statue, may resolve for himself.

Apart from the statue of Aphrodite, the Museum, as we have said, does not contain many exhibits that will greatly interest the casual visitor, although a number of the finds are of considerable value from the point of view of the archæologist. A replica of the Charioteer of Delphi quite properly finds a place here, for it was a Syracusan who presented the original to the great Temple of Apollo about 480 B.C.

In addition to the larger exhibits, there are many funeral urns and similar finds which deserve attention. I noticed an extremely beautiful alabaster urn containing funeral ashes which my guide casually ran through his fingers for my inspection.

Temple of Apollo.—The remains of the Temple of Apollo, sometimes incorrectly referred to as the Temple of Diana, or her Greek counterpart, Artemis, consist of two mutilated columns curiously close together, with entablature. The original temple erected in the sixth century B.C. is supposed to have had nineteen columns at the sides and to have had a total width of seventy-two feet.

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The Latomie.—To my mind the real attraction of Syracuse is to be found in its Latomie, the huge quarries into which were cast the unfortunate prisoners of the ancient Syracusans. For these vast pits, continually enlarged by the miserable wretches confined in them, represent history with a reality more intense than the great Greek Theatre which adjoins the Paradiso. This cannot, I think, be an exaggerated view. The Theatre at best was a place of recreation, the happy rendezvous of an idle afternoon. But the Latomie saw the armed guard about its edges and heard the cries of the diseased and half-famished Greeks who had passed from one disaster to another until it seemed that there remained no misery with which they were not acquainted.

From the Syracusan point of view, these Latomie must have constituted ideal spots in which to confine prisoners. The perpendicular walls stand rarely less than one hundred feet above the floor level and in many places greatly exceed that height. Once driven in, an army could be confined there with a minimum of effort.

Of the two best-known Latomie, that of the Cappuccini is the more picturesque although possibly the less interesting. In days gone by the Villa Politi, now the luxe hotel of the city, was a Capuchin Monastery, and the monks employed their leisure moments in beautifying the disused quarry which their garden overlooked. They did their work well. But the spot itself with the assistance of the Sicilian climate could never have been anything but picturesque. On all sides paths lead through tremendous rock arches or gloomy caverns from one natural garden to another. The narrow path marching steeply down from the entrance gate to the delightful garden in which stands the bust of Archimedes is almost tantalising in the extent to which it offers perfect views to which no camera could possibly do justice.

I spent some time wandering about the Latomia dei Cappuccini but the work of the monks had made it difficult to visualise the prison of the Athenian soldiers. We cannot indeed say with certainty that it was in this Latomia that the seven thousand survivors of the great armies of Nicias and Demosthenes were confined, although this is generally

held to be the case. 'With them the gnawing death took many forms. Some were wounded, some were already sick; the bodies of those who died were left to corrupt the air and spread sickness among their comrades. Hunger too and thirst played their part . . . All this hardship the whole seven thousand, so many as were not relieved by death, endured together for seventy days.'¹

The Latomia del Paradiso is supposed to have been cut by Carthaginian prisoners shortly before the death of Gelon in 478 B.C. It is difficult at first sight to form a correct idea of the size of this quarry since the central portion is now walled off and maintained as a garden to which admission may be gained for a small fee. The main interest of the quarry however, centres about the so called 'Ear of Dionysius' a colossal, and I imagine natural, cave extending into the rock for a distance of two hundred and ten feet. This cave is about seventy-five feet high and in width varies from sixteen to thirty-six feet. In shape it resembles the letter 'S'. A curious legend accounts for its name. To quote Baedeker: 'It is related of Dionysius that he constructed prisons so arranged that at a certain point he could detect every word spoken in them, even when whispered.'

Here Baedeker leaves the story, the absurdity of which the Editor probably deemed it unnecessary to emphasise. None the less I found that guides very frequently accept this explanation without question, and, what is still stranger, a writer as well informed as Marion Crawford tells us that Dionysius "constructed the astounding cavern" for this express purpose. It must be admitted at the start that the acoustic properties of the cave are entirely remarkable. The custodian at the door utters a word and a roar responds to him, he bangs upon the door with his hand and there issues from the darkness the thunder of a cannon fired at close range. It is not possible to exaggerate the fashion in which every sound in the cavern is reduplicated and magnified. But the very intensity of the phenomenon destroys the legend. From amongst the echoes that boom round the walls not a syllable is distinguishable. That any man could

¹ Freeman: *History of Sicily*.

disentangle, amidst such an uproar, the conversation of two prisoners amidst five thousand is a self-evident absurdity. To what use then was the cave put? There can be no doubt, I think, that here at nightfall the prisoners would congregate. The comparative smallness of the entrance and the great size of the cave made it at least a shelter from wind and rain. Here, amidst the mocking echoes, they slept and fed and died. As to the name, no one who pauses to notice the unusual shape of the opening can doubt for one moment how it originated—it resembles the human ear far too closely. Whether, as is sometimes suggested, the title was first given by the painter Caravaggio, is open to doubt. The chamber high in the roof in which Dionysius is said to have enjoyed the pleasure of hearing what his enemies thought about him—it is curious by the way, that he should have been in any doubt about it—I believe still exists, but no one is permitted to ascend to it. As long ago as 1819 Russell visiting this Latomia could find no trace of the original entrance to the chamber although he suggests that entrance was originally effected by means of a secret path. He himself gained the chamber by an opening in the cliff to which he was lowered by rope. He describes the chamber as being about six by four feet in area and possessing an opening into the grotto. He proceeds: ‘When we had thus ascended, a conversation was carried on in an under voice, in order to ascertain the truth of the echo which this grotto was stated to possess, and what was said by our companions stationed at its further extremity, was most distinctly heard.’

There can be little or no doubt, however, that the Dionysius legend is a myth.

Very near to the Ear of Dionysius is the Cordwinders Grotto (the Grotto dei Cordari) so called by reason of the rope-makers who may still be found at work there. I have no doubt that this grotto represents an unfinished effort on the part of the quarrymen, the work never having reached the stage at which the roof-supporting columns would be demolished. The rope-makers are not numerous, but a few children and women are usually in evidence and the visitor

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who leaves the grotto without an entirely superfluous piece of string in his possession is blessed with more moral courage than most of us. I have already referred to the garden which now occupies the central portion of the quarry. This will repay a visit since it assists us to estimate the real size of the place. As a garden it is quite beautiful although far less effective than the garden of the monks in the *Latomia dei Cappuccini*.

There are other *Latomie* in the vicinity of Syracuse, but the visitor who has spent a few hours in the two I have described can dispense with a visit to them.

When visiting the *Latomie* it is necessary to bear in mind that many of the huge pieces of rock which litter the floors of these quarries have been dislodged by earthquakes subsequent to classical times. None the less the appearance of these sites suggested to me that the method of working was to drive a gallery beneath the base of the cliff, a few columns being left to support the roof. When the gallery was deemed sufficiently large, the columns would be destroyed causing the face of the cliff to fall in. If this surmise is correct, some of the boulders to be seen to-day may have been brought down by Carthaginian or other workmen.

The Greek Theatre.—The Greek theatre at Syracuse is supposed to have been built by the first Hieron ¹ in the fifth century B.C. and restored, or more probably reconstructed, by the second Hieron. It is unusually attractive and in comparatively a good state of preservation. In its day it was one of the largest Greek structures of its kind and, like all Greek theatres, it was erected on a site deliberately chosen to afford a magnificent view. This care which the ancient Greeks always displayed in the settling of their drama is to my mind intensely interesting. It may be that in these open air theatres a superb view was procured merely to put a waiting audience into a good humour. But I fancy the intention was more subtle. The Greek, I believe, realised the importance of giving the mind of his audience an utterly tranquil surface that would respond instantly to every emotion of the players, and *the environment* of the Greek

¹ See page 122.

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theatre, in my opinion, was deliberately chosen to this end. It was the object of the Greek, I think, to induce a mood of restfulness which the drama could disturb in any way and to any extent desired. In these days we necessarily enter a theatre in a state of unrest, and only that play which makes a direct appeal to our personal interest, by its humour or its anxieties, or which is aided by elaborate stage effects, can capture our attention. Greek drama was far more impersonal and being much less aided by scenery, required to a far greater extent the elimination of all disturbing cross currents. In short the Greek, in my opinion, chose the site for his theatre with a definite end in view. It has surprised me that nobody, so far as I have noticed, has made this point. On the contrary it appears to be taken for granted that the Greek theatres were beautifully situated merely because the Greeks appreciated scenery.

But, however that may be, the Greek Theatre at Syracuse as usual provides one of the finest views to be found in the vicinity of the city, although this view is to-day far less beautiful than when the Greeks first chose the site.

The seats are hewn from the solid rock which, although very weather-beaten in places, still discloses forty-six tiers. The actual seating capacity of the ancient theatre was, however, greater than the remaining accommodation by about another fifteen rows of seats. The lower rows of seats to the number of eleven were covered with marble and reserved at performances for the dignitaries of the city. The seating capacity of the structure was probably about twenty-four thousand. It is a pity that *pamphleteers* find it so necessary to deal in superlatives. To describe this theatre as 'undoubtedly the finest example, both as to construction and capacity, of Greek or Roman Theatres, that has been preserved to us', is to my mind an exaggeration. The theatre at Epidauros, to take an instance within my own knowledge, is in many respects superior to it. However, so far as mere size is concerned, it was unquestionably one of the greatest of the Greek theatres.

As the reader is probably aware, classical plays were first staged in the Syracusan Theatre in 1914. The venture



STATUE OF APHRODITE ANADYOMENE

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was successful and in the course of time the work of the original Committee of Classical Performances was taken over by the Dramatic Institute which is still in charge. April and May are the months in which Greek plays may be witnessed by the curious and to judge by the response with which this development has met, the dramatic season is likely to bring considerable fame to Syracuse. I am, however, something of a barbarian in such matters and I cannot record a personal impression of what is doubtless a very interesting experience for those who have a taste for Greek drama with modern stage effects, witnessed from a hard seat under a hot sun. After all, nothing that we can do can ever bring back the theatre and the players as they actually appeared. The theatre, interesting as it undoubtedly is, is but the skeleton of its former self. In many places, as I myself saw, it had been found necessary to replace the absent or crumbling stone by wooden planks. Again, the rendering of the play may be better than the original, or not so good. But, and surely this is the important point, we may be certain it will not be the same. Neither, finally, can an audience of British and German tourists, all armed with cameras, in any way bring back those men to whom the Greek drama was almost a part of life itself, who for the sake of a few verses of Euripides would rescue prisoners from a Latomia and send them home to Athens. I would sooner myself see this theatre half ruined and deserted and imagine the rest.

However, this is a matter of personal preference and I should be sorry to carp at an effort which is most carefully prepared and in many ways most deserving. Everything that art can do to ensure an adequate representation of Greek drama in this setting, the Italians have done. To quote an Italian publication: 'No new elements of any importance have been introduced into the artistic execution of the tragedies. In its own day the Greek tragedy was always accompanied by choral and instrumental music and by dancing. But since we have the most fragmentary relic of these compositions the few themes existing were entrusted to able composers, who have done the utmost

possible with variations on the themes, to reproduce the original musical atmosphere. The score accompanying each tragedy, however, is a genuine creation and one worthy of its subject . . . special attention has been given to the choreographic part, and the dance has its due place as a purely classical expression of the mimic art.'

In short it is impossible to find fault with the manner in which the thing is done, although, in my opinion, it is still legitimate to ask whether the thing was worth doing at all. For the interest attaching to these ancient sites originates in the mind of the onlooker. It is less the thing itself than the thoughts to which it gives rise. Taken at their face value, what is there to move us in these broken stones? If we do not build such structures to-day it is only because we know of others greater, more ingeniously planned. As for the Greek plays we doubt if for dramatic effect they ever approached some of the efforts of Max Reinhardt. It is only when we mentally connect the site and its history that instinctively we stand silent. Here, upon these stones sat Plato and Aeschylus. Pindar stood as we stand, looked at the same hills, stared down at the same harbour. And here in his blindness the aged Timoleon, almost unconscious of his surroundings, mentally traversed once again that strange path that had led him from Corinth to Sicily. No effort of our own time can add to the interest attaching to this spot.

The Roman Amphitheatre.—The Roman Amphitheatre which lies a short distance to the south-east of the Greek Theatre is in part constructed of brick and in part hewn out of the rock. It is vast in size, measuring over all about one hundred and fifty-three by a hundred and thirty yards. Indeed it is said to have been the greatest structure of the kind ever erected, the Colosseum at Rome and the amphitheatres at Capua and Verona alone excepted. Apart from any question of mere size, however, the Syracusan Amphitheatre is interesting for its excellent state of preservation. It is thought to have been built by the Emperor Augustus who died in A.D. 14 and to have been restored in the third century. Opposite the main entrance to the amphitheatre

may be seen the huge cisterns by means of which the arena is said to have been flooded.

There is something very startling in the idea that these great buildings were used for aquatic spectacles and I believe I am correct in stating that it was not realised that such was the case until excavations at the Colosseum in Rome about 1875 proved the fact beyond all doubt. When examining the cistern which adjoins the Syracusan Amphitheatre I was struck by its comparatively small size. It seemed to me almost incredible that it could contain a sufficient amount of water to make the naval spectacle worth witnessing.

Russell gives its dimensions as about fifty-seven feet long, twenty-three feet wide and ten feet high and accounts for it by the desire of the Romans to afford 'A sufficient supply of water for the use of those gladiators who retired with their lives from the combats'. However, canals cut in the floor of the Amphitheatre suggest that a small part of the centre of the arena was flooded upon occasion.

More frequently than not in these Roman amphitheatres the so-called naval spectacles were enacted upon artificial canals cut across the arena. Thus the amount of water required to float the ships was considerably less than might at first be supposed. The fight, in short, necessarily took the appearance of a river contest, one or both of the contestants being quite possibly assisted by land forces. Wild beasts required for other spectacles, in Rome and probably also in Syracuse, were kept in dens below the level of the arena and carried up to the surface in lifts when their presence was required. Above the heads of the vast audience gigantic awnings afforded protection from the sun. Amazing indeed must have been the scenes enacted here. Calpurnius, a contemporary of Nero and Titus, thus depicts the impressions of a country lad on first visiting the Colosseum at Rome. ' . . . What shall I describe further? I saw all kinds of wild beasts . . . not only those carnivorous monsters of the forest, but sea-monsters together with fighting bears. I saw seals, and herds of shapeless animals bearing the name of horses (hippo-potami), but deformed,

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the off-spring of the Nile. Oh, how often have we trembling seen the arena sinking in parts, and a gulf burst open in the ground from which wild beasts have emerged.' And what was true of the Colosseum at Rome was true, if to a less degree, of Syracuse. Nothing more effectively distinguishes the Romans from the Greeks than the nature of the performances to which they looked for relaxation. To the Roman returning from gladatorial combats and wild beast hunts the simple dignity of the Greek Theatre and all that it stood for must have been utterly unintelligible—at any rate as a form of amusement.

Street of the Tombs. The visitor will almost certainly be taken through the rock-hewn Street of the Tombs. I cannot say, however, that he is likely to find this walk particularly interesting. The tombs are of late Roman construction, and of course were long ago robbed of their contents.

Catacombs of S. Giovanni. More interest attaches to the catacombs of S. Giovanni, which are considerably more extensive than the more famous catacombs of Rome. The Norman Church of S. Giovanni is situated above the subterranean chapel of S. Marcian which is supposed to be the earliest Christian place of worship in Sicily. Indeed, St. Paul is thought to have preached here on the occasion of his visit recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. This fact alone would suffice to give interest to a visit to this rock-hewn chapel. But as a matter of fact, the chapel contrives to appeal on its own merits. In the uncertain light of a flare held by a monk from the neighbouring church of S. Giovanni we can see the half obliterated traces of early attempts at sacred decoration.

Of the Church of S. Giovanni it is not necessary to say more than that the original edifice was probably destroyed in the great earthquake of the twelfth century, only the nave being rebuilt by the Normans.

Mr. Freshfield suggests that either the basilica was an ancient temple converted into a church or was built with materials taken from a classical building near by.

I cannot say that the catacombs greatly appealed to me.

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There is something gruesome in the mere idea of this underground city in which at one time only the dead were to be found. But to-day when the graves are empty, or at most contain a few bones heaped carelessly together, there is something almost futile in the sameness of those long and gloomy passages.

Gregorovius makes the interesting suggestion that these catacombs were originally quarries and that the quarrying was continued for centuries evidently according to plan since 'all the galleries lead at intervals to a central hall'.

The full extent of the catacombs is not known even to-day, as many passages are still closed. According to legend they extend for many miles underground, one version going so far as to suggest that they reach Catania. It is not necessary to accept this story, however, in order to credit the account given by Gregorovius of the tutor and six pupils who somewhere about 1894 were lost in this labyrinth. 'The party wandered about in despair seeking for an exit, then died of exhaustion and terror; they were found lying close together, four miles from the entrance. Since then apertures giving light and air have been made in the galleries, through which day dimly penetrates to this fearful Hades.' For my part, as I have said, the impression left on my mind was less one of terror than of utter futility. For those endless streets constructed with fearful labour no one knows precisely when or how, are now tenantless—even the dead have forsaken them.

Temple of Olympian Zeus. A short distance to the south-west of Syracuse, across the Anapus, on a height sixty feet above sea level, may be seen the solitary pair of mutilated columns which mark the site of the great Olympion. Unlike the large columns of the Temple of Apollo, these are hewn from a single stone. Marvellous indeed have been the sights witnessed by these ancient Doric monuments, for the great Temple of Olympian Zeus had been standing for very many years when it was captured by Nicias.

Freeman remarks of them that 'one was the second in the front to the east, while the other was one of the range on the north side. The entablature is gone; the capitals are gone;

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but we can see that the columns are of the true old Doric type ; we could tell without book that they not only looked down on the camp of Himilkôn and of Nikias, but that they beheld the march of Gelôn, when he came to make Syracuse the head of the Sikeliot cities.'

There can be little doubt that the Olympion was the richest temple of Syracuse. It contained many statues and in particular one of Zeus done in gold wearing a golden cloak. This statue survived many dangers, but eventually Dionysius, who plundered a number of temples in order to meet the expenditure he incurred in warfare, stole the cloak. Many years later, Verres, a Roman Governor of Sicily of unenviable reputation, carried off the statue itself. To-day there remains little or nothing of the great temple and, except for the purpose of seeing something of the country about Syracuse, the visitor will not consider it worth the short journey involved.

Fountain of Cyane. A more satisfactory expedition is that to the Fountain of Cyane, a deep pool from which flows the river of the same name. Those who have visited the Olympion will have noticed this stream flowing past the western side of the hill. The latter part of this trip will be made by boat. Here may be seen in abundance the rare papyrus plant once used by the Egyptians in the making of writing materials. The old leaves and spear-shaped buds are a deep red, the old stalks yellow, and the young stalks and leaves a pale green. How the papyrus first found its way to Sicily is not known. It may be, as some writers suggest, that the Saracens brought it with them, but to my mind it is more probable that it came with the Romans. The precise method of manufacture followed by the Egyptians is, I believe, lost, but it is not without interest that a kind of writing material has been manufactured from the plant, more or less as an experiment, within Syracuse itself.

For some distance the boat is propelled up this narrow winding stream past dense masses of papyrus until with astonishing suddenness the stream enters the pool where Proserpine was seized by Pluto. Few spots could be more

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picturesque, the clear water enclosed by masses of wild flowers and papyrus, reflects also the green of the surrounding country and a view of distant Etna. By birds and fish the Fountain of Cyane would appear to be particularly favoured. At any rate the former rise in numbers as the boat approaches the reeds and there seems to be no lack of the latter in the deep waters of the pool.

Euryalus. The great fortress erected by Dionysius at Euryalus is a short run by car from Syracuse and should be visited as being of considerable interest in itself apart from the position it occupied towards Syracuse in her greatest days. To appreciate the part played by this fortress the visitor should face eastward and imagine a defensive wall stretching along the crest of the hill on his right until it turns outwards to connect with the farther side of the island of Ortygia and a similar wall sloping away from him on his left to the southern shore of the Bay of Thapsos; he should picture also a continuance of both walls round the island and along the coast until they meet. With this mental picture before him he will realise that Euryalus formed the spear-head of the defended city.

At the time of the Athenian invasion Nicias hemmed in the city with investing lines that stretched from the Great Harbour on our right to the middle of Epipolae, the hill across which we are looking. Had he been able to extend his lines over the crest of the hill northward to the sea, the story of the siege of Syracuse would have had a very different ending. He failed to do so, and provisions and reinforcements regularly reached the besieged along the comparatively level ground that skirts the Bay of Thapsos. It was not probable that future invaders would make a similar mistake, therefore Dionysius, by the great walls to which I have referred, reduced the threat to impotence. The defended area with a fortress of tremendous strength at its apex now extended far into the surrounding country. Syracuse was no longer afraid that she could ever be entirely cut off from the outside world so long as her defences held good. Traces of the great walls that once linked Euryalus with Syracuse may be seen in many places, but cut down as they are, we

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are more astonished by the size of the stones used in their construction than by the defensive strength of the walls themselves.

Euryalus is astonishing in the thoroughness with which it was planned. Everything is on a colossal scale. We feel that here is a fortress that might well have been defended by the Titans against the gods, rather than by the Syracusans against the Carthaginians. Much, indeed nearly all, of the elevated structure has disappeared but there still remains a vast sunken court in which troops might shelter and where they could rally, and subterranean passages through which they could issue to the attack. When we remember that this fortress was constructed in the days of hand to hand fighting and that it could be attacked only by the battering ram and the stone balls flung by the catapult, we can well believe that Euryalus was practically impregnable. Two or three catapult stones found upon this site may be seen in the small museum here. I found that I could lift one, but I should be extremely sorry to have to carry it a distance of five yards. It says a great deal for the efficiency of the ancient catapult that these stones were flung a distance of four hundred yards. The walls and fortifications of Euryalus are intensely interesting and no one who has examined them will accuse Mr. Hutton of overstatement when he remarks that: 'They are together one of the most astounding Greek works in existence, and the fortress, Euryalus, is probably the best example left us of an ancient fortress or castle designed both as a citadel and as the apex of a defensive position.'

CHAPTER III

TAORMINA

TAORMINA is something more than the most beautiful spot in Sicily. It is, I think, one of the half dozen almost perfect places still to be found in Europe. Like Capri, it appeals more and more strongly as the days go by, and this is probably the test by which the beautiful may be distinguished from the merely pretty. There is nothing here that becomes insipid. Like some rare gem Taormina appears to take on new glories with every fleeting change of light so that eventually one becomes content merely to wander about without any definite programme. All this being so, it follows that there is very little in Taormina that can really be described. For a beautiful place like a beautiful woman, cannot be appreciated until it is seen. We may say that we like this or that feature of it, but the words convey very little.

The station of Giardini-Taormina lies about six hundred and fifty feet below the town of Taormina, and may be reached by rail in just under the three hours from Syracuse or in about eight hours and a half from Palermo. In either case the journey is extraordinarily picturesque, the line skirting the sea for many miles on end. The native population of the town is small and although there are now a number of hotels offering every comfort, I estimated that all the accommodation available for visitors would not reach thirteen hundred beds.

Below the town the bays and sands of the coast fringe the blue waters of the Ionian Sea, on the north-east a rocky height crowned by a ruined castle rises another six hundred feet or so above us, while just beyond, upon a hill two hundred feet higher, the white houses of Mola are dimly discernible. In the background Monte Venere towers up his full two thousand nine hundred feet. Indeed, Taormina, high above the shore, is itself shut in by mountains on all sides.

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Only to the south-west can the eye follow the coast for some distance. But as though the whole had been designed by some consummate artist, the land rising from these beaches carries our gaze upward to the snow-clad pinnacles of Etna. Remote and mysterious in the morning mists, or clad in crimson by the setting sun, it dominates the view.

From the Greek theatre, or from the top of the ridge leading to the castle, the northward coast may be seen and the panorama is only a trifle less wonderful than that to the south. For from these heights we may see the Straits of Messina and the uncertain outline of the Apennines upon the mainland.

The season proper at Taormina runs from February to April, but many of the hotels are open from October to May, and there is really no reason beyond custom why the English and American season should not continue for the full seven months. There is no summer season at present although there is a strong movement in favour of creating one. Whilst still concerned with the question it may be of interest to touch upon this proposal. The visitor looking along the coast in the direction of Catania will notice a small cape, the site of ancient Naxos, in the near distance. The beach at this spot, as may be seen from Taormina, is entirely of sand and it has the additional merit from the bather's point of view of being quite shallow for a considerable distance from the shore. Here, then, it is proposed to make a Sicilian Lido. Bathing huts, restaurants, anything and everything that can keep a bather in a good humour throughout the hours of daylight, are to be dumped upon the shore. As a necessary corollary to these proposals a new motor road is contemplated between the cape and Taormina so that bathers may return to their hotels with a minimum of exertion. There is still a little malaria along that part of the coast during the summer months, but Taormina is, of course, immune from that danger. It is contended by the advocates of this scheme that Taormina would secure a great influx of tourists from Italy and Malta just when, as things are, the town is most empty. Whether that would be so or not I cannot say, but, although I should



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dislike anything approximating to the Lido I should welcome a better bathing beach than the existing one, which is somewhat rocky.

As is to be expected in view of the comparatively short season, prices at the Taormina hotels are for the most part high. If the visitor will trouble to make a few inquiries in advance, however, and will take the additional precaution of arranging terms and booking his room before the season is too far advanced, he will find it possible to secure something reasonable. But in any event the best rooms in the San Domenico and Timeo are not to be commended upon the score of economy. Out of the season quite reasonable *en pension* rates can be secured almost anywhere in Taormina, but from February to April the hotels have every inducement to keep their rates as high as possible. Accommodation, as I have said, is very limited and the best hotels are so bombarded with applications for rooms that as often as not the management will not spare the time to reply in the negative. As a matter of fact although the best hotels in Taormina leave nothing to be desired in the matter of comfort, their running expenses are rendered unnecessarily high by the fact that they compete with each other for supplies in the local market. This, however, is probably a passing phase which will disappear with better organisation.

The first hotel to be erected in Taormina was the Timeo, which about fifty years ago occupied the present site of the Anglo-American store in the Corso Umberto. I believe it had accommodation for eight people. For its present magnificent position, in my opinion the finest in Taormina, the management may thank the ancient Greeks. They, at any rate, in building their theatres sought for the loveliest views, but when the first small hotel had prospered sufficiently to open a branch café the consideration which determined its position was, I imagine, the trade in coffee and biscuits which the presence of so many visitors in one spot seemed to promise. But, however it may have originated, the Timeo still manages to combine a strictly commercial outlook with a truly ideal position.

As he wanders about Taormina the visitor will inevitably

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ask himself whether the beauty of this spot can survive in an age when everyone is concerned to make money and to-morrow may take care of itself. Certain it is that such changes as will occur cannot be changes for the better. Whatever alteration there may be must be an alteration for the worse. None the less it is probable that Taormina will remain one of Europe's beauty spots for many years to come. The Italian Government, as in the case of Capri, has recognised its responsibilities in this matter and as long as the existing regulations are enforced the process of change will be a slow one. All building is now subject to the approval of a Council on which the Government is represented and which in any event is not subject to local pressure. The importance of the last mentioned point can scarcely be exaggerated. However excellent a regulation may be, it is not possible to be certain that it will be strictly enforced by one friend against another. There is, I think, a moral in this which we might well take to heart when the question is one of our English country-side. At any rate in Taormina no man can put up a new building, or even add to an existing one, until an independent body has satisfied itself that the new structure will harmonise with its surroundings and will not obstruct the view already possessed by some one else. Thus although new and larger hotels are inevitable there is some hope that they will not be permitted to spoil the general aspect of the place.

The so-called 'Greek' theatre, about seven hundred feet above the sea is, of course, the great 'show place' of Taormina. Taormina owes much to it. The Greeks attracted by the view built a theatre, and we moderns attracted by the theatre discovered the view. The building is very large and in an interesting state of preservation, but it is not Greek. Few structures more essentially Roman can be seen in Sicily, although it is true that it is built upon the foundations of the Greek theatre. This fact does not make the building any the less interesting. What is possibly to be regretted is that to nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine people in ten thousand the interest attaching to the theatre is entirely swamped by the truly entrancing nature

of the view which it affords. During one perfect morning I watched the stream of British, German, American and other visitors and noted how in passing the gate they fumbled with the leaves of their guide-books, how, climbing upward, they argued abstruse archaeological points and how, arrived at the top gallery, they all with one accord turned their back on the theatre and immersed themselves in the view.

None the less the theatre deserves attention upon its own merits, although not everyone will agree with Douglas Sladen that it is 'the most interesting theatre which has come down to us from antiquity'. The original and chief entrance to the building was up the broad flight of steps which is on the visitor's left as he reaches the theatre. Up these stairs passed all alike, but the more important persons turned off to the right through the small door that led to the better seats reserved for Senators, Magistrates and others. The second *praecinctio*, reached from the stairway a little higher, was occupied by the nobility and patricians and the third *praecinctio* was filled by the citizens. The smaller stairway under the Museum was constructed later, in the time of Augustus, as a ladies' entrance. The acoustic properties of the building are even in its present state extremely good, words spoken below without any special effort being distinctly heard in the highest tiers of seats.

The intention of the subterranean passage which runs from the centre of the arena to an opening in the wall of the *proscenium* is not clear, but the interesting suggestion is made that here were kept the brass vessels containing stones used for the imitation of thunder. It is also suggested that it constituted a channel for water, but this appears to me to be improbable. The large rooms on either side of the stage were, of course, used by the actors. The remains to be seen on the outer side of the top portico, looking towards Syracuse, are those of a small Greek temple.

It is unfortunate that the marble seats designed for the more distinguished part of the audience have entirely disappeared. A considerable quantity of this marble, was, I believe, appropriated by a Duke of Santo Stefano who built

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a palace near the Catania Gate in the fifteenth century, and some of it may be seen in the form of an altar in the Cathedral, but in any event the theatre at Taormina for very many years served the same purpose as every other ancient edifice and the Duke of Santo Stefano was by no means the only person who plundered it of marble or stone. As recently as 1865 a pillar from the theatre was in daily use as the town roller and, if only we were aware of it, we could doubtless find portions of the theatre in private houses and public buildings, not only in Sicily but abroad.

The theatre was partly restored in 1748 but the granite columns with Corinthian capitals and part of the marble architrave were reinstated still later. Monroe gives the seating capacity of the building as thirty thousand spectators, a much larger figure than I should have expected.

Finally there is a small Museum at the south-east corner of the theatre, the terrace of which is usually crowded during the afternoon with people staring at Etna. I penetrated into the interior of this building but I fear I have entirely forgotten anything I saw there. But at the best there is not very much in the Museum to interest the casual visitor and in any event mouldings and decorations wrenched away from their context make little appeal to me.

The uses to which this theatre was put were, if we may believe Signor Strazzeri, many and various. 'The bloody fights of gladiators took place in the arena. The foreign ambassadors were received there. People gathered there also, to discuss the affairs of the Republic; often deliberations took place on rewards and punishments. Justice was also administered and the criminals executed. In this place philosophers discussed their theories and poets and writers read their works.'

Although it is not certain that the theatre was used for gladiatorial contests it is at least probable that such was the case. The Romans in the matter of their amusements had been fed on strong meat and to their taste the drama as the Greeks understood it would have appeared insipid. We may, of course, affect to sneer at them for this, but it is useless to deny that for sheer excitement no play ever

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staged could compare with combats in which the losers paid with their lives there and then. Neither should we flatter ourselves that human nature has changed greatly since those days. An announcement that a dozen Russian Communists would be eaten by lions in the Wembley Stadium would suffice to fill that great structure a hundred times over. The spectacle would be vetoed, of course, but it would be vetoed because one man in ten would publicly protest whilst the other nine would lack the courage to admit that they had purchased tickets. In short, human nature has changed very little but the standard it sets itself, for one reason or another, has altered considerably.

Apart from the theatre there is so little in Taormina of archaeological interest that the visitor will be well advised to leave this side of his trip for the moment in abeyance. The only problems in this garden of Eden are the very practical ones, where to walk, bathe and take tea. Of these questions the first and second are readily disposed of. The favourite walk, almost the only walk of any distance, is that to the Castle and to Mola. It is best in my opinion not to combine both objectives in the same expedition, although to all intents and purposes the one is on the way to the other. The carriage road to the Castle is a lengthy zig-zag affair commencing on the farther side of the small Roman Theatre at the back of a very up-to-date ladies' hairdressing establishment. Those who do not relish a long up-hill walk, however, would do well to take a car. But as is generally the case in Italy, there is a charming footpath which climbs steeply upward in an almost direct line, and it is to this path that the real pleasure of the walk to the Castle or Mola attaches. As a matter of fact for every person who uses the path there are ten who follow the road, a fact which I can only explain upon the supposition that they do not realise it is there. The path leaves the road where the latter bends sharply to the left immediately before reaching the Villa Regina. In its upward course it twice intersects the road but each time continues upon the farther side of it. This track, whilst extremely picturesque, represents a very considerable saving in distance and time. Arrived at the

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top of the ridge the visitor will turn to the right, passing on his way a café with a small terrace which makes a pleasant spot at which to take a glass of wine.

Of the Castle itself it can only be said that little remains of it and that that little is most valuable as a platform from which to gaze down upon Taormina, along the coast under Etna, or across the Straits of Messina. Douglas Sladen sums up his impression as follows: 'The castle of Taormina looks as if it had been built by the people, without a regular architect, when they were desperately frightened by a sudden threat of invasion. Its architecture is as uncertain as its date, and you can say no more of it than that, seen at a due distance, it has an exceedingly picturesque effect.'

The site has, of course, certain historical associations. It was doubtless an acropolis of ancient *Tauromenium*—but the reader by this time has made up his mind to take Taormina and its surroundings for what they are.

The road to Mola runs to the left where the footpath joins the carriage road on the crest of the hill. As the road bends to the right past the small hut of the 'Douane' a path will be noticed on the left hand which should be followed. This walk, from leaving the carriage road to Mola itself, is in my opinion, the most delightful that can be taken from Taormina, which is another way of saying in Sicily. Mola gives the impression of the 'outlandish'—I do not know how otherwise to express it—in an amazing way. Upon the very pinnacle of the rock we have the remains of the castle, again less interesting for what they are than for the position they are in. But this extraordinary little town, these few houses closely packed upon the top of this precipitous rock, convey an impression of extraordinary quaintness that is almost indefinable. In these days, visitors find their way here, not in great numbers perhaps, but, at least during the season, in twos and threes. But only a few years ago, how utterly isolated the place must have been. Everything in this world is relative and from Mola, Taormina far below assumes considerable importance. It is to Mola what London is to Princess Risboro—there, at least, does life beat with furious pulsations.

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Even I, returning one evening from Mola was guilty of the remark that after all Taormina was quite a big place.

For the information of the visitor I may say that a note in my diary records the fact that a return journey made on foot from Mola to the Timeo Hotel occupied precisely forty minutes, but fifty minutes would make a more comfortable walk of it. For the climb up about one and a half hours should be allowed. Probably the best time to visit Mola is in the early morning or late afternoon, when, that is, sunrise or sunset can be seen from the vantage point of the castle.

One other walk may be referred to, although I doubt whether it repays the effort involved. Naxos, or rather the site of Naxos, the first Greek settlement in Sicily may be reached in about an hour's walk from the Catania Gate. The city lay on the flat promontory known as Cape Schiso, but beyond the lemon groves which now cover the spot, there is very little to see here nor is there much to do except to moralise upon the peculiar fate of some cities and peoples. Here was a great city which played a definite part in the history of the island. It withstood many dangers, but in the end it fell, not through the courage of the enemy but by the treachery of its own inhabitants. For the gates of Naxos were opened to Dionysius by traitors from within its own walls. And what happened? All the inhabitants of the city, men, women and children, were sold in the slave market at Syracuse and the deserted houses were utterly destroyed. Nothing was left, neither walls, nor houses, nor people. A few strangers, some Sicels, descendants of the original inhabitants of this part of the coast, were settled by the tyrant on the site, but the city of Naxos had gone for ever.

But, after all, is anybody much the better for recalling all this? It is more to the point perhaps, that one day the site of Naxos may be greatly esteemed as a bathing resort. As I have already remarked the sea here is splendidly shallow and the sand unusually good.

To turn to bathing, the second of the three resources of Taormina, it may be admitted at once that the existing

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bathing beach whilst very attractive, like everything else in Taormina, is not ideal. The beach may be reached by the delightful path which leaves the carriage road to Giardini at the Belvedere, just before the quite uninteresting Saracen tombs, and thence descends somewhat steeply. This path rejoins the carriage road on reaching the sea and at this point the visitor will invariably find a number of motors, the drivers of which will be willing, even anxious, to take him home again. It is a satisfactory thought upon a warm day that the upward climb can be dispensed with if one is so inclined. Here also will be encountered boatmen whose cry of 'Good morning, you go Isola Bella this morning?' is best replied to by a gloomy shake of the head. Once on the beach the visitor will find a small albergo with tables at which he may discuss coffee and toast, and admire the dexterity of his more amphibious friends. The bathing boxes are clean and roomy, and if the visitor has not brought his own towels and costume he can hire them here without anxiety. In truth, the one and only drawback to the site are the rocks. For some distance the water is too shallow to please the real swimmer and there is no sand to gratify the mere bather. However, from February to April it is not advisable in any event to spend too much time in the water. The sun at 11 a.m. may be, probably is, very hot, but the water has not yet absorbed the heat. In the earlier months of the year the visitor should take his bath in the sun and content himself with a dip immediately before dressing.

The all important question of afternoon tea can be settled very satisfactorily by the simple expedient of taking it in a different place each day. The Hotel San Domenico should certainly be visited in this connection and, not less certainly, the Timeo. The San Domenico, as the name implies, is an old Dominican monastery which still retains something of the picturesque appearance of more austere times, although little, perhaps, of their atmosphere. Even in the days of the friars the building occasionally housed a stranger. Russell, who visited Taormina in 1815, remarks that on landing he proceeded 'to the convent of Dominicans, where we were courteously received by the *padre rettore* as well as



GREEK THEATRE, TAORMINA, WITH DISTANT VIEW OF ETNA

found tolerably good accommodation'. I am not sure I should not have preferred the 'tolerably good accommodation' of the worthy friars to the extremely up-to-date service which to-day is provided by extremely up-to-date waiters at, of course, extremely up-to-date prices. None the less, even as things are, the long cool corridors, the pervading suggestion of other and more peaceful times and, not least, the beauty of the interior courtyard and the terrace gardens give the San Domenico an attraction of its own. The monastery church which adjoins the hotel is not of any particular interest.

I have already referred to the view from the Timeo and will not enlarge upon it except to remark that the tourist who takes his tea upon the hotel terrace upon a fine day will enjoy a view which, at any rate in my opinion, is probably unsurpassed by that from any hotel in Europe. The hotel itself lacks the individuality of the San Domenico and, probably because it has been extended from time to time, appears a trifle disjointed. It possesses, however, in addition to its outlook an asset of extraordinary value in its really magnificent garden which extends well round the point beneath the Greek theatre. The only garden I have seen in Sicily to compare with it is that of the Des Temples at Girgenti, where the plants and trees are more rare but of which the general aspect is less romantic.

A visit to the English tea-rooms in the Corso Umberto makes a pleasant change from the atmosphere of the large hotels. The English proprietress is an unfailing source of information on every subject from the shops to Mount Etna, and the tea and small scones are pleasantly familiar to an English palate. Here also is a small library and a file of the 'Times' and other English journals. Across the road but nearer to Piazza Vittorio Emanuele may be found an American tea-room advertising 'real Maple Syrup', although what that may taste like I have never had the courage to find out. Another, but more continental tea-room will be found on the farther side of the clock tower almost opposite the Metropole Hotel. About five o'clock in the afternoon this place is quite unmistakable with its

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small orchestra and general air of making tea-drinking a reckless dissipation.

No description of Taormina can be anything but incomplete that fails to mention the almond blossom which early in the year covers the trees in white and pink, or the flowers which in the spring perfume the gardens, the streets and even the hotels. Sicily is the flower garden of the Mediterranean and I do not contend that Taormina is exceptional in this respect, but where the entire outlook is so pleasant the scent of flowers is doubly appreciated. Flowers are the weeds of Taormina. I cannot think of any other sentence that so adequately sums up my impression of this place.

CHAPTER IV

SELINUNTE

SELINUNTE, once a spot somewhat difficult to arrive at, may now be conveniently reached either from Castelvetro—since the opening of the Hotel Selinus a useful spot at which to pass the night—or from Girgenti. Even from Palermo the journey in these days of motor-cars is by no means a severe one, many*travellers contriving to take Segesta *en route*.

As the reader will probably be aware, there remains in this lonely spot nothing more than the debris of what were once great temples, but it is debris of a kind that is scarcely to be met with elsewhere in Europe. All that is best of the artistic 'finds' at Selinunte have long since found a resting place in the museum at Palermo. None the less the appeal of Selinunte is still potent. There is nothing that arrests attention as does the temple at Segesta, but this is not necessarily a loss. The appeal is more to the imagination than to the eye. At Selinunte man and nature have combined to wreck what was never completed. Two at least, one of them the greatest of the temples of which we now have only the wreckage, were still far from finished when the Carthaginians carried fire and sword through the city. And what stood after that wave had passed, earthquakes have laid low. A great part of the smaller debris, all indeed that could be made of use in the construction of houses and bridges, has been carried away and we find to-day at Selinunte only the material which a few years ago was deemed to be valueless. None the less the chaotic confusion of these prodigious blocks is in its way extremely impressive. Marion Crawford, whose work will always rank high as a literary effort, although he himself would scarcely have claimed for it the detachment and impartiality of history, portrays the scene in a few telling sentences: 'At first sight the confusion looks so terrific that the whole seems as if it

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might have fallen from the sky to the world, from the homes of the gods to destruction on earth—as if Zeus might have hurled a city at mankind, to fall on Sicily in a wild wreck of senseless stone.’

The fascination of Selinunte is largely the fascination of the unknown. To what gods were these temples dedicated? We do not know. What were the limits of the town? No one can say. Those earthquakes that shattered these colossal columns to fragments, when did they occur? There is no record of them.

None the less we know that Selinus was a city of considerable wealth and that a great part of her riches were stored in the temples. The Carthaginians were so familiar with this fact that when a number of Selinuntine women fled to the temples for safety they were spared, not for pious reasons, but from fear that in sheer desperation they might set fire to the roof over their heads, and thus decrease the value of the booty which the visitors expected to secure there.

In default of any clue to the names originally attaching to them, the temples at Selinunte are designated by the first seven letters of the alphabet. Some divergence of opinion exists both as to the probable date of construction and the probable dimensions of the temples. The figures given in this chapter are those favoured by Messrs. Anderson and Spiers in their comprehensive and convenient work ‘The Architecture of Greece and Rome’. In the case of all the temples the stone used was that from the neighbouring quarries of Castelvetro where it is still possible to see vast drums of stone destined to complete the temple columns and great half-hewn capitals that were never placed in position.

The Acropolis or West Hill, the scene of the earliest town, was surrounded by a wall which was partially destroyed by the Carthaginians in 409 B.C. and partially rebuilt a few years later. Two main streets which cut across each other at right angles traversed this portion of the city, and here to the east of the point of intersection are the remains of the four temples known as A, B, C, and D, of which the greater,

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known as 'C' was 208 feet long and 78 feet 5 inches wide. The columns of this temple are said to have had a diameter of 6 feet 3 inches and a height of 28 feet 3 inches. This temple was not only the largest of the Acropolis temples but most probably the oldest. It is believed to have been erected about 575 B.C. The fact that Christian tombs have been discovered here suggests that a Christian chapel was built into the structure before it was overthrown.

It may not be out of place to touch on the metopes which once adorned this Temple and which may now be viewed in the Museum at Palermo. As works of art they fail to approach the nearly contemporary Ionian sculptures of the temple of Diana at Ephesus. None the less they possess a value of their own in so far as they are the most ancient Greek sculptures known to us. The style is severe and the figures are heavy and distorted, the faces are entirely lacking in expression. Yet when carefully examined they display a marked determination to achieve a certain effect. The metope that bears in relief a chariot and horses, for instance, has been sunk to nearly twice the depth of the other metopes in order to afford scope for the sculptor. It is, however, impossible to judge of these efforts as we see them, and we can only guess at the effect which they must have achieved when seen from below as a portion of the temple.

The greatest of the Selinuntine temples, however, were those of the East Hill upon which no other structures have been traced. These temples were three in number and are known as E, F, and G. The distance that separates these temples from the site of the ancient city coupled with the absence of other remains upon the hill has led to the suggestion that the eastern hill was regarded as a sacred precinct. The foremost temple, known as G, was undoubtedly the greatest structure of its kind after the Temple of Zeus at Girgenti. The effect of the earthquake, however, was to fling the stones of the building in all directions, and extreme difficulty was experienced by the archaeologists who endeavoured mentally to reconstruct it.

Temple 'G' was never completed and has the interesting peculiarity of possessing columns of two periods. In one

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case, attributed to 540 B.C. the column tapers from 11 feet 2 inches to 6 feet 3 inches, and in the other, attributed to 460 B.C., from 11 feet 2 inches to 8 feet, thus reversing what Fergusson states to be the normal course of development within Greece.

This great structure is supposed to have been no less than 360 feet 5 inches in length by 166 feet in width and, like the Parthenon at Athens, which when erected must have been greatly superior to it in appearance, possessed eight columns at either end and seventeen columns at each side. Gregorovius remarks that 'In 1871 Cavallari found here an ancient Doric votive inscription, which Holm was the first to decipher. It proves that the temple was dedicated to Apollo, who was consequently the tutelary deity of Selinus.'

The temple known as 'E'—a considerably smaller structure than 'G'—is supposed to have been the temple of Hera.

For some reason never satisfactorily explained, the ruins at Selinunte have preserved traces of the colouring which it is thought to a greater or less extent decorated all the Doric temples. The surfaces of the pediments, the ground of the metopes, the triglyphs and the cornices were painted in bright colours as were also the capitals and the hollow lines of the stucco-covered columns.

As we have already indicated the appeal of Selinunte lies in the extent to which it stimulates the imagination. I was interested to note that tourists who have visited this spot are invariably impressed with the colossal scale upon which the Greeks worked, and this appeared to me to be the influence of Selinunte to a much greater extent than that of Girgenti. I can only explain this fact, if it is a fact, upon the hypothesis that at Girgenti the mind accepts the temples, which for the most part are still standing, as it would do a series of pictures, whilst at Selinunte it applies itself to the ruins as it would to a problem. It is at any rate interesting that both Russell and Gregorovius who visited Selinunte in 1815 and 1853 respectively, appear to have been subject to this influence

'When at some distance the immense ruins of the ancient

Selinus presented themselves,' Russell tells us, 'one's fancy led us to suppose we were approaching the work of giants; for from their enormous bulk, we could with difficulty conceive that we were beholding the labours of men. . . . The ancients in rearing such colossal and magnificent structures, must certainly have had the real worship of their gods much less in view, than the desire of astonishing mankind.'

The comment of Gregorovius embodies a similar tribute.

'The city which erected these costly monuments numbered scarcely twenty thousand free citizens. Our capitals number millions; but what dressed up, mortal and yet pretentious things are on the whole their latest churches, palaces, opera houses, town halls, museums, compared to these temples of Selinus! At least I may here say with Boito: "The only classic art is that of the Greeks; it always remains beautiful, like the poetry of Homer."'

It is at least curious that such thoughts should be provoked by structures of which to-day scarcely one stone remains upon another. I should add that the appearance of the site in 1815 was from a distance more romantic than it is to-day. The archaeologist had not then commenced his labours and the temples lay amid the luxuriant vegetation like things forsaken.

CHAPTER V

GIRGENTI

AFTER Taormina, the most beautiful spot at which the visitor will stay in Sicily is, in my opinion, Girgenti. In a sense no two places are more dissimilar. For the attraction of Taormina is to be found in its position amongst the mountains whilst that of Girgenti lies less in the mountains which hedge it in from the centre of the island than in the plain which intervenes between the town and the sea. The impression produced by both places, however, is the same. At Girgenti, as at Taormina, the visitor loses in a delightful languor the feverish desire to be up and seeing. He no longer hurries as at Syracuse, from one interesting site to another but encounters them almost as it were by accident.

I shall not quickly forget my first sight of Girgenti. I had reached the Hotel des Temples late the previous evening and when I drew my curtains in the early morning I had no idea what to expect. I was doubtless fortunate in my moment. Beneath me lay the rare garden of the hotel, and beyond, the green countryside; still farther, upon a slight hill, the morning sun tinted with gold the almost perfect outline of the Temple of Concord, and in the distance the blue and motionless sea stretched to some unknown point at which sea and sky were one. There was not anywhere a movement. It was the most tranquil scene that I have looked on.

Until the Agrigentum hotel was opened there was, at any rate from an English standpoint, only one hotel at Girgenti, the Hotel des Temples. Not the least of the attractions possessed by the des Temples is its garden, which is the hobby of the proprietor. To the botanist this garden must be of astonishing value, for in addition to an immense variety of flowers and trees it contains, I understand, over one hundred different kinds of cactus and more than twenty

different tropical fruit trees. Such facts are unhappily lost upon those who, like myself, scarcely know one tree from another, yet even I could wander about in this garden for hours on end perfectly contented.

Church of St. Nicola. The Church of St. Nicola can be pleasantly reached through the hotel garden. The attraction of this place, however, is the Corinthian architrave of marble to be seen in the adjoining garden and the delightful view to be secured from the so-called Oratory of Phalaris. It is not known from what building the architrave was taken. The Oratory was a Roman Temple later turned into a chapel. I notice, however, a note in my diary which recalls to my mind the Greek sacrificial altar to be found within St. Nicola itself. The well into which drained the blood of the victims can be readily distinguished. The great door of the Church with its bold mouldings should also be noticed. Unfortunately the elevation of the Church above the road makes it extremely difficult to obtain a satisfactory photograph of this door, a thing I was, for some reason or other, particularly anxious to do.

Even to-day, if the caretaker of the Church is to be credited, bits of ancient pottery and so on are dug up on this site. I was offered two small clay lamps, little if at all damaged. I am inclined to accept these finds as genuine, although it is difficult to ignore the fact that where a good market exists it is certain to be supplied, if not by one means then by another. Pottery manufacturers are, of course, unfortunately proficient in every way.

Temple of Juno. But in any event the Church of St. Nicola is no more than a stepping stone to the temples and these certainly deserve all the attention the visitor can devote to them. Following the road as it bends to the left we meet the first and most perfect of these structures, the Temple of Concord; still farther in the same direction, at what was in the days of Acragas, the corner at which the southern and eastern walls met, we have the temple of Juno, or rather, possibly of Athena. The last mentioned temple, structurally the most perfect in Girgenti after the Temple of Concord, is a fine specimen of Doric architecture dating

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from the fifth century B.C. Originally the temple was surrounded by thirty-four columns, thirteen at either side and six at either end, the corner columns being counted twice over. Of these, twenty-five still survive and several half columns have been re-erected.

The height of these columns is five times their diameter. The stone used for their construction was a shell limestone which was originally covered with plaster. At the east frontage of the temple stood a flight of steps, and forty feet to the east stood a sacrificial altar (100 feet by 35 feet). It was in this temple that the Agragantines preserved one of their most cherished possessions, a painting of the Goddess executed by Zeuxis about 470 B.C. The value of this painting consisted, so it is said, in the almost miraculous fashion in which the artist had imbued his figure with life-like charm. To achieve his end, Zeuxis is said by Pliny to have stipulated that the Agragantines should give him as model the most beautiful female in the city. However, he was hard to please and in the end selected five, from whom he made what a press photographer would term a 'composite-picture', the limbs of one, the head of another, the bust of a third, the arms of a fourth, the hips of a fifth. Thus, the painting being astonishingly accurate, it was possible to say that there was no part of the goddess that had not been seen upon earth and yet that her figure transcended anything that mortals had ever looked upon. There is something in these ruins that stimulates the imagination, and I could not altogether avoid the reflection that could Zeuxis follow a similar procedure at the present day his goddess would be a very flat affair. However, not every age was as foolish as this.

Temple of Concord. The Temple of Concord is described by Russell as 'undoubtedly the most perfect Grecian monument existing in Sicily', and by Baedeker as 'one of the best preserved ancient temples in existence'. During the mediaeval period it was in use as a Christian church, a fact which may have assisted to preserve it. But at Girgenti the great destroyer of temples has been Nature rather than man, the earthquake rather than the crowbar.

‘When in the fifteenth century,’ Gregorovius tells us, ‘the cella was transformed into a chapel, the twelve arches still to be seen were broken into the lateral walls. The church was afterwards abandoned, and in 1748 the temple was restored by Prince Torremuzza. . . . Of all the temples of Italy and Sicily, none retains its cella in such preservation ; for even to the steps leading from the eastern entrance to the roof, each part remains erect, and it thus presents a complete example of the Doric building.’

It is difficult to believe that this temple was always known by its present name. The Greeks dedicated their temples to certain deities whose names recur as continually as those of the saints to whose honour the Christians have dedicated their churches, and there is nothing in the history of Greek temples that connects a Doric structure with the spirit of Concord. As a matter of fact Concord was a state of which the ancient Greek knew nothing, but that is not necessarily an argument.

In point of size the Temple of Concord is slightly greater than the Temple of Juno, 130 feet against 125 feet, the width being $55\frac{3}{4}$ feet in each case.¹ The columns also are one foot higher although of the same diameter. But it was a considerably smaller temple than that of Hercules and far smaller than the unfinished temple of Zeus.

Temple of Hercules. Very little remains to be seen of the Temple of Hercules. This temple is thought to have been erected at the end of the sixth century B.C. and when complete must have been far more inspiring than the Temple of Concord. The length of the structure was 221 feet. It was no less than 27 feet 10 inches wider than the Temple of Concord and its columns, of which unfortunately none remains in a complete state, were nearly 11 feet higher. There were thirty-eight of these columns, fifteen at either side, six at either end, the corner columns being counted twice over.

It was this temple that contained the celebrated bronze statue of Hercules which so tempted Verres (70 B.C.) that

¹ The dimensions of length and width of temples given in this chapter are those of the stylobate in each case.

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he endeavoured to steal it. Verres, it is true, as the Roman Governor of Sicily would appear to have been liable to temptation upon the slightest provocation. In itself, perhaps the fact stands for very little. Yet we know that this statue must have constituted one of the most precious possessions of the city not merely from the fact that the citizens took up arms against the Roman soldiers in its defence, and indeed saved it, but still more from an allusion in the devastating attack to which Verres was subjected by Cicero. 'There is a Temple of Hercules at Agrigentum, not far from the forum, considered holy and greatly revered among the citizens. In it there is a bronze image of Hercules himself, than which I cannot easily tell where I have seen any finer; so greatly venerated among them, O judges, that his mouth and his chin are a little worn away, because men in addressing their prayers and congratulations to him are accustomed not only to worship the statue, but even to kiss it.'¹

Another valued possession of the temple was a painting by Zeuxis of the infant Hercules strangling two serpents. Pliny tells us that Zeuxis was so charmed with this picture that he considered it above all price and for that reason presented it to the temple, a form of conceit all too rare in these more modest times.

Between the Temple of Hercules and the great unfinished Temple of Zeus may be seen the site of the Golden Gate, the Porta Aurea, through which the Romans entered Agragas in 210 B.C.

Temple of Zeus. The great Temple of Zeus, had it been completed, would have ranked as the greatest structure of its kind ever erected in the world. It was 386 feet 9 inches long, 173 feet 3 inches broad, and had on either side fourteen and at each end seven great columns, each 61 feet 9 inches high. We get a better idea of the real proportions of this temple if we compare it with the Temple of Concord. Thus we may say that the Temple of Zeus exceeded the Temple of Concord in length by 256 feet 10 inches, and in breadth by 117 feet 6 inches. Its columns were higher by 39 feet

¹ Cicero against Verres II, iv. 43.

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8 inches and in diameter at base were greater by $8\frac{1}{2}$ feet. Or, to put it another way, the Temple of Zeus was more than two and a half times as long and more than two and a half times as wide as the great temple which still stands in Girgenti. As to the columns, they were more than two and a half times as high.

Diodorus has something to say of this temple: 'When the Temple of Jupiter Olympus was near to the laying on the roof, a stop was put to the building by the War; and the city being afterwards sacked, the Acragantines were never able to finish it (from that time to this day) . . . It is the greatest in the island, and for the largeness of its foundation may compare with any other elsewhere; for though the design was never finished, yet the ancient platform is still visible; for whereas some build up their temples only with walls, or compass them round with pillars, this is built both with the one and the other. . . . The largeness and height of the porticoes are wonderful, on the east side of which is carved the giants' war, of exquisite and incomparable workmanship; on the west side is carved the destruction of Troy.'

It is impossible to contemplate a building of such proportions and design without realising that here, but for the Carthaginians, would have stood, at least for a time, one of the wonders of the world. But it was not Himilco and his troops who laid the temple in ruins. Prodigious, unfinished and neglected it saw Acragas destroyed and watched the declining fortunes of the city which succeeded it. Then some time in the Middle Ages earthquakes overthrew it. Nature itself appeared to resent the presence of this, the greatest, survivor of an almost forgotten age. By repeated attacks it pulled it to the earth and man, the scavenger of Nature, carried off for his own uses large pieces of the debris.

Fazello who rediscovered the temple when its very name and situation had been forgotten has this note: 'Although the remains of the building fell in course of time, a portion, supported by three giants and some columns, remained erect for a long period. This fragment is preserved as a

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memorial in the city of Agrigentum even to the present day, and has been placed in the city's coat of arms. But even this portion fell owing to the negligence of the Agrigentans on 9th December, 1401.'

One of these colossal figures, 27 feet in height, may be seen to-day lying upon its back, an end that contrasts strangely with the pride that must have surrounded it when it was reared into position two thousand four hundred odd years ago. No one knows on which side of the structure was the entrance. Generally speaking, we should expect to find this at the eastern extremity of the building, but it has been suggested that the somewhat unusual design of this structure led the architect to place his entrance on the west. However, nothing is known upon this point. As regards the general appearance of the building, however, most people will agree with Gregorovius that it must have lost something from the fact that the columns were not isolated. Presumably they either stood against the enclosing walls or were actually embedded in them. A column in suggestion and original intention is a massive support and to be really effective it should have the appearance of supporting.

The ruins remaining upon this site are considerably less than the great size of the temple would lead us to anticipate. The explanation is to be found in the fact that about the commencement of the last century the Sicilian Government authorised their engineers to use the materials of the temple in the construction of the mole at Porto Empedocle, a circumstance that at some far distant date may greatly perplex the archaeologist concerned to ascertain the nature of that strange structure.

Temple of Castor and Pollux. The Temple of Castor and Pollux, about two hundred yards to the north-west of the Olympion was, even in a complete state, smaller than the Temple of Juno. It did not exceed 102 feet in length and 42 feet in breadth. The columns, however, were of the same height. There is, in a sense, more to be seen here than upon the site of the Olympion, but there is less reality. For the columns now standing were re-erected by Serra di Falco and Cavallari. To quote Hutton: 'These columns are



TEMPLE OF JUNO, GIRGENTI

a fanciful re-erection, the absurd but most effective corner of a temple, set up from the remains of two different temples.'

None the less the impression conveyed by fiction upon its feet is sometimes more accurate than that produced by truth in fragments upon the ground.

Passing from the Temple of Castor and Pollux to the north-west the visitor will notice a hollow which marks the remains of the fish pond in which in the days of their greatness the Acragantines kept a supply of rare fish from which to furnish their banqueting tables.

Theron. The prosperity of Acragas may be said to date from the time of Theron (480-472 B.C.) and it was this ruler who surrounded the city by a great wall and who commenced, if he did not actually complete, the temples along the southern wall. Freeman suggests that the walls and the temples 'both formed part of a great plan for the enlargement and strengthening and beautifying of the city'.

We cannot, however, state anything definite upon this point. It was the practice of the Greeks to place their temples upon sites which would enhance their grandeur. Acragas, it will be remembered, lay in the valley between its acropolis, now the site of Girgenti, and the southern range of hills upon which these temples were erected. It was almost inevitable therefore that the temples should have been placed where they are, since older temples, now destroyed, already stood upon the acropolis. In short, the vacant hills to the south, in their relationship to the ancient city, constituted the most effective sites that could be found. The wall again would follow a similar line upon its merits, since it would naturally be designed to enclose the high ground. However, if the walls and southern temples were not actually planned at the same time, it is probable that the period which intervened between the construction of one and the other was comparatively short.

The actual work of construction was carried out by the thousands of Carthaginian slaves captured at Himera. Diodorus tells us that not a few Acragantine citizens owned as many as five hundred captives. Since the wall followed the line of the high ground it follows that the nature of the

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work varied in different places. In some places the natural height of the cliff was increased, in others where the ground was less rocky it was cut away and rendered perpendicular, occasionally the wall was built up from some low level. The cutting of the cliff at the south-western corner of the wall will be readily detected.

Girgenti. My recollection of the present town of Girgenti is so unfavourable that I should feel I was doing the place an injustice were it not that others have been similarly impressed. As regards position, views, streets and houses there is nothing to complain of and much to appreciate, although the Cathedral is the only Church that merits a visit. But the people have an air of possessing a secret grievance. Nowhere does the visitor feel that he is welcome. Even in the shops politeness appears the result of an effort. In Sicily this peculiarity of the Girgenti people is well known and held to be the result of close intimacy with the sulphur industry. Sulphur, it should be said, is extensively mined all round Girgenti and certainly in times past the conditions of labour were atrocious. Things have considerably improved of late years but even to-day are by no means ideal.

For many miles on either side of the city sulphur covers the landscape with a yellow cloud of resentment. There seems to be something in the sulphur itself, its jaundiced colour, its acrid properties, that crabs the spirit of those who have to deal with it. For if the inhabitants of Girgenti are sullen, those of the towns round about are still more so. Mr. Hutton, writing of Porto Empedocle, once the Molo di Girgenti, the port from which great quantities of the mineral are shipped, makes the following comment: 'Yes, that world of misery and sulphur swirls round the high acropolis of Girgenti and trickles down to the sea at Porto Empedocle. It does not spoil the southern landscape, still enchanted by its temples and its memories, but it certainly sours the Agrigentines and marks them with the stigmata of industrialism. You will as soon get a gentle answer as a rough one, let us say, in Girgenti itself; but not so soon in Porto Empedocle.'

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But I fancy that so far as Girgenti itself goes, there is more in it than the sulphur. The townspeople have been a curiously isolated set for many years past. They have the air of resenting innovations which they cannot defeat. The townsman who has left his daughters to gaze through shuttered windows cannot be expected to sympathise with the short skirt and long cigarette holder of the emancipated tourist, and if his contempt is all for the men of her party I confess I am not altogether astonished.

Girgenti will not be able to retain its point of view for long, of course ; as a matter of fact young unmarried girls may be seen walking about to-day, although not in great numbers. With such enlightened countries as China, Russia and Great Britain all splendidly feminist there is not much hope for Girgenti. Apart from the quite harmless, if slightly unpleasant attitude, of its inhabitants, the walk from the des Temples to the town is well worth making.

The Cathedral. The chief attraction of the Cathedral is the marble sarcophagus bearing in relief the story of Phaedra and Hippolytus. It was found originally I believe in the Temple of Concord, but Hutton remarks that it is a Roman copy of a Greek original. For some years until its incongruity was noted, it formed the high altar of the cathedral. Hippolytus, in Greek legend the son of Theseus and Hyppolyte, the Amazon Queen, was a famous hunter with whom, unfortunately, his stepmother Phaedra fell in love. He rejected her advances, however, and she in despair and revenge killed herself, leaving a letter in which she accused Hippolytus of attempts upon her virtue. Theseus, who should have been better informed, believed this abominable story and not content with driving his son from his house with curses, he called upon Poseidon to destroy him. Thus the unfortunate Hippolytus whilst driving his chariot along the sea-shore was assailed by a horrid monster which emerged from the water. His horses took to flight and he himself was flung from the chariot and, entangled in the reins, was dragged along the ground until he died. As Sladen suggests, not perhaps the most appropriate story for a

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high altar. The Cathedral has been extensively modernised but the pillars and the roof deserve attention.

The attraction of Girgenti is not readily put into words and conceivably there are people who would not experience it to any marked degree. But the man who will carry in his mind the extent and fortunes of Acragas will find his walks of extraordinary interest. Traces of the ancient city walls for instance may still be discovered without trouble and it is possible to locate with fair accuracy the site of the Carthaginian encampments. In short, the visitor who endeavours to 'do' Girgenti with the aid of a guide book within, say, twenty-four hours misses the real delights of the place. The requirements of Girgenti are a walking-stick and a contemplative mind.

CHAPTER VI

PALERMO

FEW cities are more beautifully situated than Palermo. Indeed few views are better known than that which reveals itself to the gaze of the tourist who approaches the city from the sea.

Gregorovius who includes Palermo amongst the 'three most beautiful sea-ports of Italy', compares it with Naples, to the advantage, however, of Naples. The nature of the comparison is indicated in the following sentences: 'Palermo stretching out in the most luxuriant of valleys and surrounded by mountains of sculpturesque outline, which project a short way into the sea, on one side in Cape Pellegrino, on the other in the promontory of Zaffarano, forms a picture enchanting both in colour and outline. At Naples all is vastness, all bathed in such light and infinitude that the senses are carried away and no repose is allowed to the distracted eye.'

But although it is doubtless the case that the Bay of Naples offers the more magnificent view of the two, the difference, as Gregorovius suggests, is rather one of extent than of degree. So far as it goes, the setting of Palermo is perfect.

The chief failing of the city is undoubtedly the extremely poor use to which, at present, it puts its incomparable sea front. Judged from a photograph, the Foro Umberto leaves little to be desired. But in fact it is as dreary and ugly a frontage as any town can boast. If the street were reduced in width by one half and the ground thus saved were planted with trees, the Foro would be a little more worthy of its view. But even with these improvements the frontage must remain a trifle desolate whilst, as at present, its farther side is entirely destitute of hotels, cafés or shops. Nothing more astonished me in Palermo than the determination with which the town has turned its back upon the sea. Fortunately the town and Government are combining to

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introduce certain improvements within the city limits and the sea front will doubtless be taken in hand sooner or later.

As a shopping centre Palermo is easily ahead of any other city in the island and indeed compares favourably with any other Italian city of the same size. The shop windows of the Via Maqueda exhibit goods of excellent quality, and prices are more reasonable than upon the French Riviera. Many of the smaller streets are decidedly picturesque. In short, when other distractions fail, the visitor can fill in time quite pleasantly 'looking at the shops'.

There is of course a good theatre in the Sicilian capital, but the most attractive amusements of foreign cities are those which are peculiar to the place and in this connection I would recommend a visit to the Marionette Theatre, conducted by the Greco family, in the Piazza S. Cosimo. The real delight of this entertainment, apart from the skill of the exhibitors, lies in its setting. The theatre is very small, the seats are wooden benches, the orchestra is a piano-organ operated by a junior member of the family, and abominably out of tune. The figures which pirouette upon the stage with astonishing reality are, I fancy, home-made, but they are none the worse for that. The stories represented are mostly old folk tales in which knights and dragons—the last terrible animals with gnashing jaws and apparently insatiable appetites—fight it out to the bitter end. The number of figures that can be made to appear upon the stage at one and the same time is astonishing. But the marionette show is an institution long established in Sicily, and, although the trappings of the show may be crude, the cleverness of the performance is never in doubt.

It is an interesting suggestion that in the Sicilian marionette show may be found the origin of the gaily pictured carts to be met with everywhere on the island. Whether this is actually the case or not I cannot say, but the remark was made to me by a man well acquainted with Sicilian customs. In any case the legends depicted on the carts are those enacted in the marionette theatres.

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The Sicilian cart, by the way, is not decorated in any light-hearted fashion. An immense amount of care and labour go to the make-up of the finished article and a really well-painted cart is handed down as a valued possession from father to son.

Palermo is well supplied with hotels offering accommodation of all grades from the luxury of the Villa Igiea to the doubtful comforts of the true Sicilian albergo. The tourist would be well advised to consult Cooks or C.I.T.¹ on his choice, since it is by no means necessary to pay a high rate in order to secure comfortable quarters. Unlike the hotels in Taormina, the leading hotels of Palermo remain open during the summer months. A drive out to the Igiea for tea on the terrace, where the view is delightful, and a stroll through the enchanting hotel gardens, make a very pleasant occupation for the later part of an afternoon. For use on all ordinary occasions an admirable tea resort may be found at the corner of the Corso Vittorio Emanuele and the Via Maqueda.

Bathing takes place at the Lido di Mondello to the west of the harbour, about twenty minutes' drive by motor from the centre of the city. The visitor to Sicily will recollect that the sun bath is quite practicable in the winter months, although it is unwise to spend much time in the water. The bathing beach is admirably equipped in every way and boasts a spacious restaurant and tea room. Adjoining the beach will be found a good golf links and tennis courts.

There is no English Club in Palermo although there is a small English colony, smaller in fact than at Taormina.

The great attraction of Palermo, apart from its uses as a centre for expeditions to Segesta and other places, lies in its churches, which I should imagine are almost unrivalled for beauty of decoration. Credit for this fact must be given to the Saracens who brought into the island the charm of the Orient and gave to architecture an inspiration that was to bear fruit long after they themselves had ceased to rule. None the less it is an astonishing fact that in this city of eastern influence there is no solitary building of

¹ Italian State Travel Bureau.

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which we can say, 'this is pure Saracen'. For what we may gather of Saracen art we have to thank the Normans. However, if 'the hand is the hand of Esau, the voice is the voice of Jacob'.

When the Norman conquerors arrived in Sicily they found Palermo to all intents and purposes an Eastern city. As it happened, however, the newcomers were essentially warriors. They had carved with the sword an amazing footing in Italy and with the sword they had maintained it. The style of architecture which we now know as Norman had not as yet made its appearance amongst these daring exiles and they were wedded to no preference of their own beyond those sensuous enjoyments which are a natural reaction from sustained physical effort. It is not altogether surprising therefore, that they succumbed at once to the prevailing spirit. Roger and his immediate successors might profess the Christian religion but they lived as Eastern potentates. When towards the end of the twelfth century Mohamed-Ibn-Dgubair of Valencia travelled in Sicily, he extolled King William and his love for Islam. The king, he tells us, 'reads and writes Arabic; his harem consists of Mussulman women. His pages and eunuchs are in secret Mohammedans'. In the architecture and decoration of the Norman churches in Sicily we see this blending of the cross and the crescent curiously reflected.

Unfortunately there is available very little exact information relative to Byzantine or Saracen architecture in Sicily. The authoritative work upon this subject has still to be written. There are no Byzantine churches which we can point to as having influenced the Saracen architects, and there remain no Saracen buildings which we may compare with the Norman-Saracen churches. We cannot even positively assert that the Normans employed Saracen architects when their churches were planned, although it would appear probable that this was the case. But whilst leaning to this view, we cannot ignore the fact that the Christian element remained an important one in the population of the island throughout the Saracen occupation. The Christians, it is true, were not permitted to erect new

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churches but their Arabian rulers allowed them to keep existing churches and monasteries in repair, and for such work, doubtless, Christian architects were responsible. It would appear possible, therefore, that on the advent of the Normans there existed in the island a style of architecture which was adopted in its essence both by Mohammedan and Christian and which was employed by the newcomers as pleasing and ready to hand.

Fergusson remarks that with the Norman sway a style arose which was 'Greek in essence, Roman in form, and Saracenic in decoration . . . the Roman outline was filled up and decorated to suit the taste and conciliate the feelings of the worshippers, who were conquered Greeks or converted Moors'.

But however we may describe the Norman churches of Sicily it is certain that they represent less the steady development of a certain school of architecture, than the product of different and almost opposing ideas rapidly, almost violently, coalesced. The result is distinctly pleasing and, not unnaturally, unique. We cannot find in Palermo the graceful tracery of arches and pillars, minarets and domes in which Ali traces 'the strong resemblance to the arching and doming of the palm-groves, so dear to the Arab'. Yet in all Arabian architecture there is an element of the fantastic, which, in Palermo, if it may not be seen, is still suggested. Again the domes, so typical of Byzantine churches from the sixth to the eleventh centuries, are by no means a feature of the churches in Palermo; none the less we find them here and there. Of the builders alone we find virtually no trace, and this fact we can account for only upon the supposition, reasonable enough in the light of their history, that they alone were possessed of no art form peculiarly their own.

The mosaic work which figures so prominently in the Norman churches was not of course introduced either by the Normans or the Saracens. Mosaics were much valued by the Byzantines who found this form of decoration in frequent use in the East when the Eastern Roman Empire came into being. The art, in short, is sufficiently old for

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its origin to be lost. The Saracens wherever they conquered may be said to have stimulated existing art forms rather than to have imposed an art of their own, and there is little doubt that the rich interiors of the Byzantine churches fascinated these artistic strangers into the employment of similar decorations in their own buildings. Thus mosaic work must have been well-known and in constant use in Sicily when Roger first entered the island. There is, however, a distinction between Sicilian and Greek mosaic which favours the former, for the Sicilian mosaics are of softer colouring and are less harsh in outlines. What Cotterill describes as 'a new and distinctly noble style' was developed by the Lombard-Norman artists in Sicily.

Freeman¹ speaks of the 'Pointed' buildings of Sicily as 'undoubtedly the earliest Latin edifices in which we find a systematic use of the pointed arch'. This form of arch usually foreign to Arabian architecture, is indeed so pronounced a feature of the Norman churches in the island that at first sight many will find in it a suggestion of the Gothic. But in Sicily the pointed arch was never either a vaulting or constructive expedient. As Fergusson remarks, 'it was simply a mode of eking out, by its own taller form and by stilting, the limited height of the Roman pillars which they (the Saracens) found and used so freely'. It is, however, a curious and interesting fact that this feature which was to become so famous upon the mainland neither entered Sicily from abroad nor spread from Sicily to the continent. As we see it in Palermo, the pointed arch arose and died the product of local conditions.

When we turn from the Norman churches to the Norman palaces we find conditions which differ little if at all from those we have mentioned. Here again we cannot point to buildings of undoubted Saracenic construction and design. It was thought at one time that the palaces of La Cuba and La Ziza were pure Arabian but even this claim recent research has disproved. None the less, if we may accept the suggestion that the Normans contributed little or nothing to the architectural forms existing when they arrived,

¹ *A History of Architecture.*

we have in these and other buildings a fairly accurate representation of the style of palace which the Arabs erected for their own use.

The Cathedral. The Cathedral as we now see it is by no means the most interesting of the churches in Palermo. It possesses little dignity of outline and fails to associate itself with any mental picture of a religious edifice. Yet, as more than one writer points out, the highly ornamented exterior is at once rich and effective. In short, I was led to the conclusion that I might have found the building very pleasing had it been devoted to some other purpose. However, what we now see owes most to the fourteenth century; of the original building erected by Walter of the Mill in 1185 only the crypt and southern and eastern walls remain. The façade dates from the fourteenth century, the very incongruous dome, the work of a Neapolitan architect, was added in 1781.

It seems to be probable that Walter of the Mill, the English Archbishop during the reigns of the two Williams, owed his appointment to the Normans. Thus it happened that the Sicilian cathedral was erected by an Englishman at the behest of a Norman, upon the site of an ancient church which the Saracens had converted into a mosque and which had subsequently been reconverted into a church.

The most interesting features of the interior are the tombs in which rest the Emperor Frederick II, who died in 1250, his father Henry VI, King Roger and his daughter, the wife of Henry VI.

Frederick II has been described as 'the most gifted prince to whom Germany has given birth'. It was his misfortune, however, to live in days when ecclesiastical opinion assumed an importance to which nothing could entitle it, and he passed a large part of his life in more or less open warfare with Popes, bishops and priests. He was under sentence of excommunication when actively engaged in the crusades and when he entered Jerusalem in triumph he found it necessary to place the crown upon his head with his own hands because no priest would perform the office for him. Frederick died in Apulia and was brought to Sicily under an

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escort, which included his Saracen bodyguard, to be buried in the church in which as a child he had been crowned. These great sarcophagi are of uncommon interest. 'Never', says Gregorovius, 'have I seen any royal tombs of Christian times that are so majestically simple and imposing, destined apparently to last to the end of time. In tombs of like majesty Nibelung kings might fitly repose.'

The tombs of Frederick II and Henry VI were provided by King Roger probably for himself and his wife and by him placed in Cefalu Cathedral. However, Roger died in Palermo and was there buried and the sarcophagi were eventually moved from Cefalu to the Cathedral in the Sicilian capital by Frederick II.

In 1491 these tombs, which then stood in a chapel near the choir, were opened by the Spanish Viceroy, and in 1781 they were removed to their present position and again opened. 'The body of Frederick II', writes the Neapolitan historian Daniele, 'was clad in magnificent vestments and was well preserved, although, with but little reverence, two other corpses had been placed in the coffin beside him; one was believed to be Peter II of Aragon, who died in 1342, the other remained unrecognised. The Emperor's crown set with pearls, lay on his leather pillow, and at the left side of his head the orb of Empire. He wore an emerald ring on his finger, had his sword by his side, and round his waist a silk girdle with a silver clasp, on his feet silken boots embroidered in colours, and gold spurs.'

The sepulchre of King Roger and his daughter had been already rifled of everything of value, the bodies had crumbled away.

Apart from these great tombs there remains little within the Cathedral that serves to recall its past beauty. Ferdinand I stripped the walls of the porphyry and lapis-lazuli that covered them, the paintings were stolen, even the sepulchral slabs of marble were broken up. In my diary I find I have mentioned the chapel of the Holy Spirit where I admired the lapis-lazuli and the effect of gold upon the rich blue of an altar.

The Palazzo Reale and Cappella Palatina. The Palazzo



VIEW OF PALERMO FROM VILLA BELMONTE

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Reale occupies the site of the ancient castle which was the seat of power in the early history of the city. Of this ancient structure no trace remains. With the coming of the Saracens the site was devoted to a palace in which the Emirs resided. Roger, I having enlarged the existing building, dwelt here in oriental luxury and here also his successors held court in their turn. Thus this palace has played an important part in the history of the city from the earliest times. Of the building known to the Norman kings, only the tower known as Sta. Ninfa and the Cappella Palatina remain to us. The palace as we now see it may be dismissed in a word, it differs very little from a hundred others to be seen in all parts of the Continent and contains only one room, known as King Roger's chamber, where for the sake of the mosaics I was inclined to linger.

In the Cappella Palatina, the Normans have bequeathed to us a gem of the first water, a rare and beautiful possession which becomes increasingly precious as the years pass. This small chapel, it is about 125 feet long and not much more than 40 feet wide, was erected by King Roger II in 1132 and dedicated to St. Peter. The walls of the church, the cupola itself constitute glistening surfaces of glass mosaic, in which biblical scenes appear in marvellous colours upon a golden background, the floor is inlaid with coloured marble. I have never seen any effect more astonishingly perfect, and was content to accept the chapel as a whole, allowing a hundred details to blend into one entrancing vision. None the less every detail of this chapel deserves notice.

Of considerable interest as showing the extent to which the Norman Kings had identified themselves with Arabian custom and thought is the notice to be found in Latin, Greek and Arabic on the wall of the vestibule referring to the erection of a clock in 1142: 'The order is issued by his Royal Majesty the Magnificent Ruler, the Exalted One, to whom may God grant everlasting days and whose sign may He confirm, that this instrument be constructed for recording the hours. In the metropolis of Sicily (by God) protected in the 536th year (of the Hegira).'

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The scenes depicted in mosaic represent Old Testament stories and incidents in the life of Christ and the Apostles, those in the portico, according to Gregorovius, bearing reference to Roger's coronation. The portico, in which may be found six columns of Egyptian granite, once surrounded the chapel. The choir and altar are surrounded by panels of the rare red porphyry.

San Giovanni degli Eremiti. Fergusson remarks of San Giovanni that 'were we guided by architectural considerations alone, this church would have more properly been described under the head of Saracenic than of Christian architecture', and expressions in a similar sense may be found in the works of practically all who have described it. Certainly so far as the external appearance of the church is concerned it is extremely difficult to believe that it was constructed by King Roger, a Christian King, for purely Christian purposes. However, the fact admits of no doubt. It is not even the oldest of the Norman-Saracen buildings, but dates from the comparatively late year of 1132.

With the five domes, to which more than to any other feature the Oriental appearance of San Giovanni is due, I will deal later. The interior of the building, long since disused, resembles a T in shape with three apses and gives no indication of the rich decoration which distinguishes the greater number of the Norman churches. A small mosque once stood upon this site and may be seen in part to-day. However, apart from its domed roof, the chief interest of San Giovanni lies in the delightful cloisters which, however, are of later date than the church. In this quiet and picturesque corner of Palermo two or three artists may usually be found at work, for the cloisters and the view they afford of the church itself, are in their way unique. As often as not pictures are offered for sale upon the spot.

The five domes, which, to my mind are easily the most suggestive feature of San Giovanni, are most generally accepted as more or less hap-hazard imitations of the Arabian style, or less reasonably as a relic of the Byzantine, and I should myself so have regarded them had I not chanced to notice the following paragraph in Stanley Lane-Poole's

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Art of the Saracens in Egypt: 'It is a mistake to suppose that the dome is an essential feature of a mosque. The minaret is essential, because there must be a raised tower from which the adān, or call to Prayer, may resound over the city. . . . A dome, however, has nothing whatever to do with prayer, and therefore nothing with a mosque. It is simply the roof of a tomb to be covered, or at least where it was intended that a tomb should be. Only when there is a chapel attached to a mosque, containing the tomb of the founder or his family, is there a dome, and it is no more closely connected with the mosque itself than the grave it covers: neither is necessary to the place of prayer. . . . Most mosques with tombs have domes, but no mosque that was not intended to contain a tomb ever had one in the true sense.'

Now as it happens the domes of San Giovanni are in an architectural sense utterly unlike the Byzantine dome. The question immediately arises therefore, was San Giovanni degli Eremiti deliberately designed as a burying place? The answer is that under the Normans the whole building was used as a burial place for the nobility. It is extremely curious that, so far as I have noticed, nobody has brought together this peculiar feature of construction and the purpose which the church was intended to serve. If my inference is correct, San Giovanni was deliberately designed as a burial place, and if we admit this probability we must regard the form of the roof as constituting probably the most convincing evidence we have of the extent to which the Normans identified themselves with Arabian thought and custom.

Finally so far as concerns the domes of San Giovanni, the visitor may be interested to note that Gregorovius writing in 1853 refers to them as blue, a colour which would tend to give them even a more picturesque appearance than the dull red of to-day. Whether they have been repainted or the author's memory played him false in this particular I failed to ascertain. Hamilton Jackson, in his extremely informative guide to Sicily, traces the name of the church to the fact that 'the monks whom Roger established there

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were of the Order of hermits founded by St. William of Vercelli and Giovanni da Musco, and came from Monte Vergine in Apulia'.

La Martorana. The Church of La Martorana was erected in the Byzantine style in 1143 by the admiral of Roger I, and thus gained its earlier title of Santa Maria dell' Ammiraglio. Georgius Antiochenos or George of Antioch, the admiral in question, carried the Great Count's banner to victory off the African coast and, shortly after the erection of La Martorana, throughout Greece. Here his victories were more easily secured but failed of any lasting result. It was this champion of the sword who transported to Sicily the Greek silk weavers of both sexes and who is credited with the biting remark that the distaff and the loom were the only weapons which the Greeks were capable of using. In the fifteenth century the church was given to the Benedictine nuns of a neighbouring convent founded by the lady of Godfrey of Martorana and thus secured its present name.

The most striking feature of the church as we now see it is the great mosaic of Count Roger receiving his crown from the hands of Christ. As the reader will recollect, this monarch's coronation was regarded as invalid by the orthodox on the ground that the papal legate who officiated represented the Antipope Anacletus whose actions were subsequently annulled by the Lateran Council. It is true that Roger eventually made a captive of Innocent II, whose claims the Council supported, and secured from him recognition as King of Sicily. None the less the incident probably rankled in the mind of Roger, and the grand-admiral doubtless congratulated himself upon a happy and convenient thought when he decided to depict his monarch as crowned by the One to whom the Pontiff was himself subservient. It is an interesting fact that the costume in which the Great Count is depicted is that in which, on the opening of his tomb, the body of Frederick II was found to be clothed, and doubtless every other feature of the picture has a certain significance.

The second mosaic, considerably restored, represents the gallant admiral at the feet of the Virgin, an attitude in

fitting contrast to that of his Royal Master. The open scroll in the hand of the Virgin embodies her petition upon behalf of the Admiral: 'Defend, O Son, the Word in all things, defend from all offence George the first of all princes, who has built me this temple from the beginning and give him remission of sins, for thou alone, as God, hast power.' On high Christ appears as though receiving and granting the prayer.

Unfortunately this church, beautiful as it still is, is but the shadow of its former self. The external mosaics have been destroyed and the interior has been repeatedly altered. The visitor, however, will notice two columns bearing Arabic inscriptions which must have been moved from the debris of some mosque to do service for the Christian faith.

San Giuseppe and the Casa Professa. While an attempt to deal in detail with the many churches which the visitor to Palermo will explore at his leisure is fortunately unnecessary, two, the Church of San Giuseppe and the Casa Professa (Gesù), may be instanced for the contrast which they offer in internal decoration. The latter is ornamented to an incredible extent, but in the former the severity of the granite columns serves to set off the marvellous beauties of the roof and walls.

The Convento dei Cappuccini. The Convento dei Cappuccini affords the most gruesome and unnatural sight that it has ever been my fortune to encounter. For very many years, it appears, the monks of the Cappuccini constituted their monastery a burial place in which the dead were not interred in the earth but underwent a process of mummification. It is necessary to express the matter in this fashion as the bodies at the end of it all in no way resemble anything that may be met with elsewhere. The Egyptian mummy with which we are all familiar does not suggest death. It is in fact so treated and apparelled that we regard it as a thing apart, neither as dead nor necessarily connected with death. There are other processes of embalming in which the features, perfect but expressionless, surprise us by their unfamiliarity. But the bodies of the Cappuccini resemble nothing with which we have any fellowship. I

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am myself unaware of the precise method followed by the monks, but whatever it may have been it resulted in the drying and shrivelling of the skin into every form of shocking distortion. All this was bad enough but the effect was intensified by the fact that each corpse was clothed in garments peculiar to its occupation or status in life—priests in their cowls, virgins in bridal garb, crown upon the head, soldiers in uniform, old women in black,—babies. Originally I imagine, each was placed in a glass-fronted box of its own. But in the course of time the gloomy subterranean corridors filled up and recourse was had to the walls. The corpses were literally strung up. The dead lined the passages. Then as though this were not sufficient the Government put a stop to the practice and the catacombs were neglected ; time rotted the cords, laid his hand upon the silk dress of the virgin and the cowl of the monk and spread over the galleries a cloak of horror and decay. No words can describe the scene as it now is. Behind glass, cracked or broken, many of the dead still lie in mouldering finery, as though resignation had followed upon a last effort at escape. But from the walls others, through the failure of the cords that held them, lean forward in every attitude of ghastly invocation, their features distorted into a semblance of malignity almost inhuman.

I arrived at the Cappuccini towards mid-day and the monk who showed me round was persuaded with difficulty to leave his meal. In the end he effected a compromise between his financial and physical requirements and brought a sandwich with him. We descended without speech and, arrived at the foot of the stairs, entered abruptly upon these horrible caverns. My companion made a comprehensive sweep with his arm and resumed his munching. I made my tour in silent amazement.

What are we to think of the pride and affection that could abandon to such a fate a father, a brother or a child ? But, if it comes to that, is there any circumstance so horrible or so absurd that human nature may not become accustomed to it and ultimately accept it as desirable ? Probably not.

As I regained the staircase, my tour completed, a black



THE MUMMIES OF THE CAPPUCCINI

cat made his appearance from nowhere. From the last stair he surveyed those grinning and menacing spectres; motionless, silent, his tail erect. Only a Guy de Maupassant could have done justice to it. I fled.

Monreale Cathedral. The morning spent in the Cathedral of Monreale is likely to remain one of the most vivid and pleasant of the recollections which the visitor to Palermo will carry away with him. For this building, unambitious as it may appear from without, affords a wealth of colour within which for richness and beauty is unsurpassed in Sicily. The cloisters again are unrivalled in beauty. Indeed it can probably be said of Monreale that there is no other building in the world that can compete with it upon its own ground.

Of William II, who built the cathedral, Gibbon remarks that his 'youth, innocence and beauty endeared him to the nation: the factions were reconciled; the laws were revived and, from the manhood to the premature death of that amiable prince, Sicily enjoyed a short season of peace, justice and happiness'.

We may add that, probably on the advice of Walter of the Mill, who was his tutor and afterwards his archbishop, William II married Joan, daughter of our English Henry II and sister of Richard Cœur-de-Lion.

Monreale Cathedral was commenced in 1174 and was completed in about six years.

As we have suggested, the exterior of the building will not be considered impressive by anyone familiar with the graceful lines of Gothic architecture, but the bronze door at the west entrance made by Bonannus of Pisa should be noticed for its artistic workmanship. It is, however, upon the richness of its interior mosaics that the reputation of Monreale is based. Nothing indeed is lacking that can serve to display this beauty to advantage. As Fergusson points out, even the architectural features of the building were sacrificed by the builders to the decoration which covers every part of the interior and is, in fact, 'the glory and pride of the edifice, by which alone it is entitled to rank among the finest of mediaeval churches'.

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Of Saracen influence Monreale is singularly free, almost the only Saracenic feature being the familiar pointed arches which rest upon Corinthian columns, all, with one exception, of granite. The windows are undivided and can never have been intended for painted glass. Two thrones against the high Altar were provided for the king and the archbishop respectively. Some idea of the extent of the mosaic work may be gathered from the fact that it is said to cover in all an area of approximately seventy thousand four hundred feet. It is difficult to avoid the impression that the most celebrated of the mosaics, those above the thrones depicting King William receiving his crown from Christ and the same king offering a model of the Cathedral to the Virgin, were inspired by the two well-known designs in La Martorana. Many of the Old Testament scenes depicted in the nave may be readily identified by the visitor familiar with Biblical history and the same remark will apply to the designs in the aisles and transepts taken from the life of Christ.

‘It is highly significant to behold Greek and Roman saints together in the same temple’, says Gregorovius, who would appear to attach almost as great importance to the nature of the mosaics as to the workmanship which they represent. He classes them indeed with Dante’s *Divina Commedia* and Giotto’s sculptures on the Campanile in Florence as ‘homogeneous and spiritually related monuments of a time when the Christian idea called forth the most comprehensive forms of art’ and when ‘the system of Christianity was grasped in a noble unity’. In support of this suggestion Gregorovius follows the system of distribution from the gigantic form of Christ in the tribune through the creation and Jacob’s struggle with the angel to the Old Testament scenes in the central nave and the history of the life of Christ in the sanctuary and the side aisles and from thence to the two lateral naves, where are introduced such prophets and patriarchs as foretold the coming of Christ. ‘And lastly is depicted the mythology, almost too extensive for the eye to follow, of martyrs and saints. Peter and Paul as the chief princes of the Church are placed in the apse alongside of Christ; on the right Peter . . . above and



INTERIOR OF MONREALE CATHEDRAL

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sideways are scenes taken from his life. In like manner on the left we also see St. Paul . . . and above him the representation of his execution.'

But whilst we are compelled to share the admiration of the German savant for the vast field which these mosaics cover, we doubt whether they are best appreciated when examined in detail. Taken as a whole the decoration of the interior fascinates us and makes criticism almost a blasphemy. But scrutinised more closely the figures become stilted, the drawing defective, and the composition unreal. We should indeed assess Monreale as we assess a tastefully furnished room, not by the intrinsic value of each contributory factor but by the impression of unity and beauty which it leaves upon the mind.

In 1811 the Cathedral suffered severe damage by fire occasioned by a chorister who accidentally set fire to a cupboard and, after a futile attempt to extinguish the flames, shut the cupboard door and trotted home. The chief damage occurred to the roof which was largely destroyed. Falling rafters damaged the tombs of William I and William II; the mosaics also suffered severely. Russell, who visited Monreale about four years later, remarks that 'a considerable part of this cathedral now lies in ruins'. However, the work of restoration was undertaken with ardour and to-day very little trace of the calamity remains.

Adjoining the cathedral are the unrivalled cloisters of the Benedictine convent which William II brought to Monreale from La Cava. The peaceful beauty of this spot makes it peculiarly attractive even to-day and assists us to grasp the immense amount of labour, the unceasing effort, which was once at the service of the Church. There are, I believe, something like two hundred and sixteen columns in these cloisters and no two are alike in decoration. Similarly with the capitals of the columns, the amazing variety of design suggests less the labour of the workman than the pride of the master craftsman.

The view from the terrace opening off the cloisters is very pleasant, but it will be the recollection of the Cathedral and the Cloisters that the visitor will carry away with him.

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La Ziza and La Cuba. The palaces of La Ziza and La Cuba were for some time regarded as dating from the Saracen and pre-Norman period, but are now known to have been erected, La Ziza by William I between 1154 and 1166, and La Cuba by William II about 1180. Both palaces or villas, however, display the Saracen taste to an exceptional degree; both possess the pointed arch although in the great hall of La Ziza Corinthian columns support a round segmental arch. Freeman directs attention to the 'magnificent dripping ornament' of the roof of La Ziza as closely allied to similar ornamentation in the Alhambra at Granada.

The spacious garden of La Ziza, in which, according to legend, the shades of Norman nobles were wont to seek a ghostly treasure, is now unhappily a thing of the past, but sufficient remains of the building to indicate the luxury and beauty for which in years past it was so famous.

La Cuba is to-day unrecognisable as the delectable scene mentioned by Boccaccio. However, the surviving pavilion of the palace repays a visit.

Villa Giulia and the Botanical Gardens. The garden of the Villa Giulia and the Botanical Gardens are extremely interesting for the varieties of trees which they contain, but I found the 'lay out' disappointing and considered that with such a climate and flora Palermo might have improved upon its efforts in both these spots. There was, I thought, a superabundance of paths and a surprising scarcity of flowers.

The Museum. Although the Museo Nazionale contains treasures of the first importance to the archaeologist and antiquarian, it is scarcely a building to which a great deal of time will be devoted by the casual visitor. It is the resort of the student rather than the tourist. None the less certain of the exhibits are of such general interest that no sightseer would willingly miss them. This is particularly the case with the metopes from the great temple at Selinus, to which I have referred elsewhere,¹ and not less with the great bronze ram which once faced its fellow upon some gate in Syracuse. This very life-like ram survived the

¹ See p. 54

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disaster in which its fellow perished and ultimately reached the Palace in Palermo from which it was moved to its present resting place. Doubtless in the course of time it will find still more palatial quarters; it will almost certainly be admired by people who will scoff at my contemporaries as barbarians. A friend remarked to me, apropos of this bronze, 'It is interesting to think of the people who have looked at this thing during the past few hundred years.' I replied, 'It is far more interesting to think of the people who *will* look at it hundreds of years after we are dead.' Well, I think, it is.

These, and a few other exhibits, cannot fail to arrest the attention of the most casual visitor; many of the paintings, again, have a general as well as an artistic interest. However, the detailed guide which may be obtained within the Museum renders these generalities unnecessary.

Monte Pellegrino. The great limestone rock, to the west of the harbour is the best known landmark in the vicinity of Palermo. As Monroe remarks, it recalls the rock of Gibraltar. Fortunately in these days the ascent can be made in comfort along the steep road that runs in zig-zags to the crest, and magnificent indeed is the view that repays this slight effort. Before the new road was constructed, however, the ascent of the mountain—it is I believe nearly two thousand feet in height—was something of an adventure. Russell remarks plaintively that the cliff in many places was almost perpendicular. Close under the summit of the rock is a church erected to mark the shrine of Santa Rosalia, the patron saint of Palermo. There appears to be some slight doubt who precisely Santa Rosalia may have been, although the theory that she was a niece of King William the Good is generally accepted. But in any event she was attached to the Norman Court when at an early age she decided to pass the remainder of her days in pious meditation, and retired to a damp cave upon Monte Pellegrino. She had not been here long, however, when in the words of Russell 'She departed from the troubles and miseries of this sublunary world'. It does not appear that Santa Rosalia was particularly esteemed during her life-time, in fact

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nobody appears to have bothered about her one way or the other. About 1624, however, Palermo was visited by the plague and one of her citizens half crazy with fear, preached the divine efficacy of Rosalia's bones, preserved as they were by the minerals carried by the dripping water of the grotto. The Church bowed to the storm, the bones were fetched down, the plague abated and Rosalia's fame was firmly established. Since then a festival in her honour has been held annually and a chapel adorned with her statue, which necessarily cannot resemble her, has been erected at the grotto. It is difficult to recount these tales without reference to their tedious monotony or without the conjecture what would have been the reputation of many of our saints if priestly historians had been less conscientious in meeting the requirements of their time.

Piana dei Greci. While in Palermo I took the opportunity to motor to Piana dei Greci where almost alone in Sicily one may still meet the descendants of the Albanian Greeks. A few colonies of these fugitives appear to have entered Sicily in 1488 and to a remarkable extent they have retained their racial characteristics throughout the four hundred odd years that have intervened. Their religious ceremonies, their social customs and to some extent their language, still remain their own and they are regarded even to-day as a foreign race by the Sicilians round about them.

Upon feast days, I understand, the women of the Greci still wear the extremely picturesque costume and head-dress peculiar to themselves, but I was not so fortunate as to see it. Upon the occasion of my visit their attire differed very little from that to be seen in any street in Palermo.

Apart from its inhabitants, Piana dei Greci has little attraction. The town itself possesses no building of any particular interest and in default of any other attraction the visitor is likely to be taken to the artificial lake in course of completion in the interests of one of the many hydro-electric schemes from which Sicily will benefit in the near future. After walking the entire length of the lake over the contractor's railway I reached the dam at the mouth of the valley, an imposing affair gained through a tunnel driven

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through the neighbouring cliff. But whilst the experience was of interest as indicating the new spirit which is now manifesting itself throughout the length and breadth of Italy, I saw nothing that could not be seen on a greater scale elsewhere on the Continent or even in England. The drive to Piana dei Greci occupies about one hour, fast driving, and as the road climbs the hills at the back of the city many fine views are afforded both of Palermo and Monreale. Indeed the drive to and from Piana is to my mind the most attractive feature of a visit to that place.

CHAPTER VII

CEFALU

FROM Palermo an enjoyable and extremely interesting trip may be made to Cefalu where the old Norman Cathedral possesses some of the finest mosaics in Sicily. The journey by rail from Palermo occupies about one hour and a quarter. As, however, the trains from Cefalu to Palermo are not frequent the trip is most conveniently made by car. Apart from the Cathedral there is not much that will detain the visitor in Cefalu, and it is an unquestionable convenience in such circumstances to be free to commence the return journey without unprofitable delay.

The first sight of this town is, I think, somewhat misleading. Viewed from the train approaching from the direction of Messina, Cefalu is extremely picturesque and even attractive. But upon closer acquaintance the picturesque tends to become squalid and to lose its glamour. Cefalu in fact does not cater for tourists and will not admit of any compromise with its habits. If the visitor chooses to eat Sicilian fare and will tolerate a few Sicilian insects he can stop at an inn, if not, not.

Ancient Cefalu, Cephaloedium as the Romans termed it, occupied the precipitous hill which lies at the back of the present town. We first hear of it in the days of Dionysius I in 397 B.C., but it plays a very small part in Sicilian history and little that is satisfactory or definite is to be gleaned from the scanty remains which the hill still has to show, the traces of a Saracen cistern, the debris of an unidentified temple, and, at the summit, the remnants of some great structure probably a Norman castle. But what the hill lacks in archaeological interest is more than made good in panorama, sea, mountain and plain combining to produce an unforgettable picture.

The great attraction at Cefalu is, of course, the Cathedral, of which the imposing outline is a landmark from afar. It

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is said that Count Roger II, returning to Sicily to assume the Crown, was in great danger of shipwreck and in his extremity made a vow that if he should reach the shore alive he would build a church where he landed. He landed at Cefalu, so the story goes, and the church stands a monument to his safety. However, the old monkish historians were quite as familiar with the art of propaganda as any journalist of the present day, and a picture of royalty saved from death by the intervention of Providence (and dutifully grateful) was too useful not to be produced with some frequency. The surface of history is littered with these pretty stories.

Roger II was a son of the Great Count who had brought all Sicily beneath his sway. In authority the Great Count may have been more than a King, but in title he was merely Count of Sicily and ranked more or less upon an equality with his brothers who ruled over territories on the mainland. Roger II, when he came of age, took advantage of circumstances and claimed the Italian territories held by other members of his family. The Pope opposed the claim, but Roger had his way, and in due course united under one Crown all the lands previously divided amongst different members of the family. The history of these Norman conquerors is a history of adventurers who secure their possessions by the use of armed force, and who subsequently make their title secure by a show of papal authority. The Church was not always an unwilling sponsor. To the Pontiff in those uncertain days, the strong arm of the Norman possessed a value all its own. Thus, at least in semblance, the Normans and the Church moved hand in hand, alike supported and supporting.

Roger II having effectively asserted his claim to the Italian lands under Norman control, returned to Sicily in 1129, and in 1130 assumed the title King of Sicily. His domains now exceeded those previously held by any of the counts of Apulia and although the monarchy was a new one it might vie with many of greater age, both on the ground of size and power. It was therefore entirely natural that the new monarch should wish to signalise his achievement by the erection of a church which should exceed in point of

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size and grandeur any previously built by his father. Thus the Cathedral at Cefalu was at once proof of his resources and a claim to papal benevolence. Roger himself is credited with the statement: 'A worthy and reasonable thing it is to build a house for our Lord, and to found a refuge in honour of Him who has so benefited us and has decorated our name with the ornament of Kingship.'

The statement is honourable to Roger, but it does him less than justice. The assistance which he rendered to Providence was not slight.

Like the Cathedral at Monreale, the great church at Cefalu in decidedly Romanesque although the Saracen influence may here and there be detected, even from without. The visitor familiar with the churches of Normandy, however, will probably be more impressed by the general familiarity of the outline than by any feature with which he has become acquainted in Palermo. Fergusson remarks that 'with its two western towers it displays more Gothic feeling than any other Church in Sicily'.

The Church is built in the form of a Latin cross and doubtless contains much material from earlier buildings, notably the great blocks of stone upon which rest the façade, and the granite pillars in the nave. According to Fazello, King Roger brought the columns from the ancient church on the mountain. In the internal design of the building Norman influence is far less noticeable than in the exterior. As Hutton remarks: 'Everything is devoted to an effect of lightness and height, the Church soars up almost like a Gothic building, and yet no Gothic Church of the North ever had this effect of space, of light, of colour.'

The charm of the interior, as is customary with the Norman Sicilian churches, lies in its brilliant decoration, the mosaics ranking amongst the finest work of the kind known to us. The great half-length figure of Christ is generally considered a finer piece of work than its counterpart at Monreale. There is an interesting tradition concerning these mosaics that they were executed by monks from Mount Athos brought to Sicily by King Roger for the express purpose.

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The length of the Cathedral is about 235 feet, and its width 90 feet. All the arches are pointed, a sign of the Saracen influence. The roof, which is wooden is for the most part a restoration, and dates from the middle ages.

The columns of the nave are of interest on account of their age, which probably greatly exceeds that of the building itself, fifteen are of granite and one of cipolin, an Italian marble. Many of the mosaics were not completed until after Roger's death and others were restored in the reign of Frederick II by the chief of the School of Mosaics at Palermo, the date of the restoration being stated at 1859.

Thus the Cathedral as we see it is far from presenting the same appearance as the Cathedral constructed by Roger II. Not only are more recent mosaics considerably in evidence but original mosaics, notably those of the portico walls beneath the towers, have been entirely obliterated. The interior plan of the Cathedral has also been modernised. However, when everything has been said on this score the Cathedral remains one of the most striking of the religious edifices of the island, although in general interest it falls short, in my opinion, of the slightly more recent Cathedral at Monreale.

The importance which the royal builder attached to the Cathedral at Cefalu is shown by the massive sarcophagi which he placed here, it is believed for the remains of himself and his wife. As the reader familiar with Palermo will be aware, his intention in this respect did not materialise and the sarcophagi were ultimately removed to the Cathedral in the Sicilian capital where they are occupied by Henry VI and Frederick II. It was the last named monarch who effected the transfer in the absence, so it is said, of the bishop of Cefalu, who was conveniently dispatched upon a mission to Damascus. Upon his return the indignant Bishop promptly excommunicated Frederick, but the feud was patched up and the sarcophagi never returned to Cefalu.

The great size of the Cathedral, the exceptional richness of its mosaics, and not least the apparent intention of King Roger to make it his last resting place, cause us some astonishment when we recollect that Cefalu itself was a town

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of little or no importance when the Cathedral was built. Indeed the modern town at the foot of the cliffs dates only from this time. It is inevitable, therefore, that we should ask ourselves why this Cathedral was not erected in Palermo, and why King Roger should prefer Cefalu to his capital as the spot in which he was to lie. The question would, we think, be hard to answer if we were to take it for granted that all the considerations involved were present in King Roger's mind when the Cathedral was commenced. But it seems to us to be more probable that one event led naturally to another. Roger, we think, landed in Cefalu and desiring to mark his assumption of the Kingship by the erection of a church, he decided to place it upon the spot at which he had landed. *Cefalu, in short, was to be the link between the assumption of the title and the field in which it was earned.* The location of the Church being decided on, he caused the edifice to surpass in grandeur any church with which he was familiar ; this he did we imagine from a mixture of vanity and policy. Finally we come to the sarcophagi of which the origin is unknown. These, we think, were placed in Cefalu, both because it was the most magnificent church which King Roger had built and still more so because it commemorated the gain of a title to which his predecessor could not lay claim. Palermo might be an appropriate resting place for the Great Count whose dominions did not extend beyond the island, but it could not hold the same importance in the thoughts of Roger II whose territory lay for the greater part across the sea.

TRAPANI

Another pleasant excursion by motor from Palermo is that to Trapani and Monte San Giuliano, the site of Eryx of classical fame. The journey, however, is a longer one than that to Cefalu and involves a night at Trapani, where the Grand Hotel affords reasonable accommodation.

Trapani, the ancient Drepana, is a commercial port which has considerably increased in size of late years. Many large

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steamers make it a port of call and it is fast losing its somewhat provincial atmosphere. Apart, however, from a number of windmills, used to grind salt secured from the evaporation of sea-water, Trapani does not possess any feature which may be said to be peculiarly its own. However, the interest attaching to this expedition does not centre in Trapani but in Monte San Giuliano, a hill which rises about 2,460 feet above sea level but which, from its isolated position, looks higher than it really is.

The town of San Giuliano upon the summit of the hill marks the site of Eryx, once renowned throughout the civilised world for its temple of Venus. Strabo devotes a paragraph to this temple which goes far to account for its fame: 'Eryx, a very lofty mountain, is also inhabited. It possesses a Temple of Venus, which is very much esteemed, in former times it was well filled with women sacred to the Goddess, whom the inhabitants of Sicily, and also many others, offered in accomplishment of their vows.'

It will be remembered that when Segesta desired to entice the Athenians to assist them against Syracuse they treated the Athenian envoys to a sight of great riches which it was afterwards found were not their own. It is thought by some writers that a considerable portion of this gold was borrowed from the Temple of Venus at Eryx. But whether that was so or not, it is certain that Eryx and Segesta were united by a common antipathy to the Greeks.

Of the great walls which once surrounded the city a few traces may still be found, but it cannot be said that peculiar interest attaches to them. Gregorovius mentions certain characters upon some of the blocks which he was informed were of Phoenician origin, but he expressly states that he had some difficulty in recognising them as such.

In short, it may be said more or less accurately that there is practically nothing of historic interest to be seen to-day either at Trapani or upon Monte San Giuliano. The interest in the trip lies in the scenery traversed en route, in the magnificent view that crowns the journey and in the satisfaction which every traveller must experience when he stands upon a site renowned in history.

CHAPTER VIII

SEGESTA

THE trip to Segesta is one of the most enjoyable expeditions that Sicily has to offer. If made from Palermo the journey to and fro can be completed in the day without fatigue, and I am not sure that the appeal of the ancient and lonely Greek temple is not enhanced by contrast with the marvellously decorated churches which the visitor leaves behind him and to which he will return. However, Segesta is about thirty-nine miles from the Sicilian capital and before the advent of the motor it was the habit to take Segesta and Selinunte en route to Girgenti. In those days the last few miles of the road offered some difficulty and the first glimpse of the temple was a reward which the traveller felt to be well earned. When Russell visited Segesta in 1815 the road terminated at Alcamo where he passed the night having left Palermo early in the morning. On the following day he had still three hours of fatigue in the saddle before the temple was gained. 'The bridle-way, if we may so express ourselves, was very bad, and lay through an uncultivated and mountainous country.' The era of the horse was followed by that of the railroad when travellers jolted in hazardous discomfort to the station at Calatafimi or Alcamo from which point they proceeded on mule-back. To-day, so far as a trip to Segesta is concerned, the horse and the train have given place to the motor with an amazing saving of time and fatigue, and the advent of the motor, of course, has led to the development of roads. Prior to the present year the last half mile of the route continued to be something of an adventure. Between the main road and the temple, the Gaggera intervened. There was no bridge and it was never quite certain that the ford would be anything better than a hopeful expression. However, even that uncertainty has vanished and a well metalled road and substantial bridge now carry the tourist to a point

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immediately beneath the temple to which access is gained by carefully cut steps. Segesta, in short, will soon be popularised. From a valued reward only to be gained at the expense of hazard and exertion, it will become a convenient resort for a picnic. But that is the way of things. Romance enfeebled, when it left the train, has been run over by the motor ; only a few who once knew it still raise their hats when they pass it in the ditch.

The circular motor tour run by A.S.T.I.S. to some extent follows the old programme of pre-railway days. The saving in time, of course, really forbids of any comparison, but Segesta and Selinunte are taken once again en route to Girgenti. The car leaves Palermo at 9 a.m., reaches Segesta at noon and leaves at 3 p.m. for Castelvetro where the night is spent. A quicker journey can be made if the visitor hires his own car in Palermo. I have a note in my diary that the average time spent on the journey in such circumstances is two hours and a half. However, my own driver went out in two hours and five minutes and, for reasons of his own which I did not attempt to fathom, would have returned in less if he had not punctured a tyre on the way.

On the return journey we made a slight deviation from the direct route, passing through Borgetta and Monreale. Both going and returning the scenery was magnificent and the road extremely interesting. I have nowhere motored through village streets more quaint or uncertain. On more than one occasion I should have supposed, had the idea been less ridiculous, that my driver had lost his way and had unaccountably involved his car in the intricacies of somebody's back yard.

Alcamo, passed en route, is a town of some size of Saracen origin. It contains, however, nothing that warrants a break in the journey. More interesting to my mind was a large village from which the mosquitoes have driven out the inhabitants. Here nature for once, and probably but for the moment, has vanquished man. It is hard to imagine a more curious contest. The inhabitants had everything at stake. These houses represented their money and their

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time. That an insect as insignificant as a mosquito, by sheer force of numbers, should compel these unhappy people to abandon everything and fly is astonishing. In the winter and spring, I am told, a few of the villagers return, but the hosts of mosquitoes appear with the hot weather and overrun the village once again. However, the mosquito has a formidable foe in the Fascist Government, which is fighting these pests with the same energy that it displays in every other direction. Swamps are being drained, ponds are treated chemically and a determined effort is being made to stamp out the malaria which the mosquito transmits. No one can doubt how the contest will end. There will be many more generations of apparently triumphant mosquitoes but, none the less for that, the handwriting has appeared upon the wall.

Arrived at Segesta the visitor is at once impressed by the peculiar loneliness of the temple. At Girgenti the temples are some little distance from the town, but the town is there within sight. At Segesta, however, the temple constitutes the only structure within our vision. As a matter of fact the city of Segesta was one of the greatest importance in its day, but it stood upon the Monte Varvaro at the back of the ruined theatre and little or nothing remains of it. The temple has suffered very little at the hand of time. It was never completed and, to a considerable extent, we see it to-day as the Segestan builders left it. The stylobate remains defective, the top step being unfinished so that the Doric columns appear to have a base. The columns themselves are not fluted. The ancones, or projections upon the stone blocks to which the lifting gear was attached, were never chiselled off, and the cella was never completed.

Viewed merely as an example of Doric art, the temple at Segesta ranks below the temples of Juno and Concord at Girgenti, but taken in conjunction with its surroundings it is possibly the most effective Greek temple in the world. Its isolated position and the charm of the country about it combine to produce a picture which remains in the memory and which impresses upon the mind the age and history of

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this great monument. The material used in construction appears to be similar to that of the Girgenti temples and gives the building a warm and pleasing appearance. The temple was completed in the latter half of the fifth century B.C. and was dedicated to Ceres. It is about 200 feet long and about $76\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide. The columns, which number six at either end and fourteen on either side, are with capitals not quite 31 feet in height and slightly exceed 6 feet in thickness at the base; they are therefore higher than those of the Temple of Concord at Girgenti. The effect of the larger building and of increased thickness, however, is such as to make them almost squat in appearance.

However, as I have said, the real beauty of the Temple of Ceres lies in its situation. The site was indeed wonderfully well chosen from the point of view of the citizens of Segesta, although as may be appreciated even to-day, it was necessary to level the top of the hill before the building could be erected.

I should possibly have pointed out earlier in this chapter that the visitor to Segesta must take his luncheon with him. So far as my experience goes, the Palermo hotels cater for one's appetite upon such occasions in the most lavish fashion and it must be admitted that amid such surroundings the contents of the luncheon basket are a sheer delight.

A relic of pre-motor days is to be seen in the mule boys who wander about the temple and endeavour to persuade visitors to ascend to the theatre on mule-back. It is difficult not to be sorry for these men whose sphere of activity has been so curtailed by the newly constructed road. However, the path up Monte Varvaro is neither lengthy nor difficult to find, and the return journey, at any rate, is made in greater comfort on foot than in the saddle.

The Greek theatre at Segesta is less noteworthy for its size than for the view which it affords. To the north may be seen the deep blue of the sea fringed by the coast line of Castellamare, whilst to the south and to either side we are hedged in by mountains separated by inviting valleys. The theatre, although upon comparatively a small scale,

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differs little from other Greek theatres. Monroe remarks that: 'The theatres at Syracuse, Taormina, Segesta and Catania, while greatly modified by additions during the Roman period, have no counterparts in Greece.'

But it is not clear what is intended by this statement. In all the Greek theatres of Europe the proscenium has long since been destroyed and what remains, that is the seats and their arrangement, do not greatly differ. It may have been the case that the proscenium was lavishly decorated and that such decorations in Sicily differed from those of Greece, but it is difficult to imagine why this should be the case. I did not myself detect any very notable difference between the Greek theatres of Greece and those of Sicily with the exception of the theatre at Taormina. But the theatre at Taormina as it stands to-day is far more a Roman structure than a Greek one. If it is the suggestion that the theatres in Greece are inferior to those at the places named, I cannot agree. The theatre at Syracuse may be compared with the theatre at Epidauros but I do not think it is superior to it, on the contrary. So far as the theatre at Segesta is concerned, it is extremely delightful but otherwise in no respect out of the common.

For the benefit of those readers who have not a Baedeker at hand I may state that the diameter of the theatre is 205 feet, that of the stage 90 feet, and that of the orchestra 53 feet. For the purpose of comparison I may add that the diameter of the theatre at Syracuse is 441 feet, and of the theatre at Epidauros in Greece 415 feet.

It is generally agreed by those who are conversant with such matters that the temple at Segesta gains rather than loses from the fact that it was never completed. The design, as we have remarked, is by no means representative of the best form of Doric architecture, and would probably look unnecessarily heavy had the interior been finished.

The history of Segesta is not altogether a satisfactory one even for Sicily and goes far to explain the fact that the temple is as we find it. The Segestans, it will be remembered, in 415 B.C. brought the Athenian invasion about the head of Syracuse. The episode was more or less discreditable to



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everybody, although it had its amusing side. To win Athenian support against Selinus the Segestans treated the Athenian envoys to a marvellous display of wealth. So boundless it appeared were the Segestan resources that the city offered sixty talents of uncoined silver as a month's pay in advance for the crews of sixty triremes. The envoys were the recipients of amazing hospitality and at every banquet, no matter who might be the host, the plate was of gold and silver. Such wealth in the hands of every important citizen was convincing, and the Athenians never doubted that Sicily overflowed with riches. However, when the Athenians had committed themselves the truth came out. The sixty talents represented the total wealth of the city, nothing was left. As to the gold plate, what there was of it was mostly borrowed from other cities and the *same service was made to do duty at every banquet*. The Athenians, fairly tricked, took from the Segestans what they could and when they set off to the disastrous siege of Syracuse the city must have been bankrupt or nearly so. A few years later (in 410 B.C.) the Segestans, still involved in disputes with Selinus, invited aid from the Carthaginians and in the event became a mere dependency of Carthage. Then in 306 B.C., if we may accept the account of Diodorus, the city met with a terrible end at the hands of some one little better than a madman. Agathocles is mentioned elsewhere in this book ¹ and it will suffice here to note that he was a successful tyrant of Syracuse who had won noteworthy successes over the Carthaginians. Why he should have attacked Segesta, a city said to have been in alliance with him at the time, is not clear, unless we may credit the report that he had no better object than to extract from the inhabitants a treasure they probably did not possess. However, whatever his reasons may have been, Agathocles and his troops passed through Segesta like a consuming fire. But Diodorus may well tell his own story: 'As for Agathocles, as soon as he landed in Sicily by a hasty flight out of Africa, he sent for part of his forces, and marched to the confederate city of the Aegestines; and being in want of money, exacted the greater

¹ See p. 144.

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part of the estates of these that were rich, in which place were 10,000 inhabitants. . . . Agathocles, finding out that the Aegestines were plotting against him, brought most dreadful calamities upon the city : for, drawing all the poor out of the town, he cut all their throats upon the bank of the river Scamander.' The torture of those presumed to have money can scarcely be described. ' . . . Some he broke upon the wheel ; others he bound to his engines of battery and shot them away like stones. . . . He invented likewise another sort of punishment . . . for he made a bed of brass exactly like the shape of a man wherein were several openings and hollow places on every side : those that he intended to torment he put into this bed, and then put fire under it, and burnt them to death . . . those who perished and were consumed in these straight and narrow holes, were exposed to the view of everyone. He would likewise break in pieces the ankle bones of some of the rich women with iron pincers, and cut off the breasts of others.'—However, it is unnecessary to enlarge any further upon the enormities of a man in whom there appears no single redeeming quality. In the worlds of Freeman : 'The whole full-grown population of Segesta were said to have perished ; the maidens and boys were carried to Italy and sold to the Bruttians. A new city bearing a new name, Dicaïopolis, sprang up upon the site and lasted well into Saracen times but the fame of the spot had disappeared with the passing of Segesta.'

Probably it would be a mistake to accept the account of Diodorus at its face value. The hanging of the dog with the bad name has been a favourite pastime with historians of every age and clime. None the less, when every allowance has been made, there can be little doubt that Agathocles acted like an enraged lunatic, and that the unfortunate Segestans passed from history at his hands. If, then, we accept the latter half of the fifth century as the period in which the temple was commenced, we can understand how it happened that it was never completed. Doubtless the Athenian envoys gazed at it with interest and well simulated admiration—for it would not compare too favourably with

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the Parthenon—and doubtless they took for granted the ability of their wealthy hosts to complete it upon the grandest scale. But the Segestans in their fear of Selinus had placed their all upon the cloth and the game went against them from that moment for the rest of their history.

CHAPTER IX

MESSINA

SO far as the tourist is concerned, the interest that attaches to Messina at the present moment necessarily centres about the appalling catastrophe of the 28th December, 1908. As everybody is aware, at 5.21 of the morning of that day the town was practically destroyed by earthquake. All this I myself knew when I visited Messina in the spring of 1927, yet it required that visit to bring home to me the full extent of the tragedy. For Messina as we see it to-day is only intelligible in the light of that event. Nearly twenty years have passed, but the story of the earthquake is still necessary to explain what we see.

At the present moment there are virtually two cities in Messina, a small part of old Messina adjoining the railway station and the far larger devastated area extending from north to south in an almost straight line parallel with the harbour. It might perhaps be said that there exists a third Messina in the countless wooden huts erected for survivors of the earthquake and for the most part still occupied.

Old Messina, if we may so distinguish the small part of Messina that survived from the great part that was thrown down, offers very little that will interest the tourist. The houses and shops are commonplace and the city, although busy, is undistinguished. But this is not surprising, for it formed by no means an important part of the original town. The earthquake area on the other hand is, in a sense, still fascinating. The dividing line between the saved and the overthrown was clearly marked in 1927. On one side of the road everything was normal, there was no suggestion that anything out of the ordinary had or could have taken place, on the other there stretched a land of ruin intersected by new roads; a land in which new buildings, often still encased in scaffolding, reared themselves amidst hills of debris covered, but scarcely concealed, by the rank grass.

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For some little time after the earthquake it appears to have been taken for granted that Messina had disappeared for ever. Accommodation of some sort had to be provided for the thousands who had lost everything, even to their clothes, and in the shape of huts was in fact forthcoming ; but few people believed that Messina would ever again be a town in the accepted sense of the word. It was, I imagine, this tacit acceptance of the apparently inevitable that nullified any effective effort to rebuild Messina immediately after the disaster. The matter was discussed, the rebuilding was accepted in theory, but the faith that could set men to work was lacking and for years practically nothing was done. It appeared impossible that a town could survive such a catastrophe and again stand upon its feet. A life-long cripple was the most that men looked for in such circumstances. I shall be told, of course, that the difficulty was one of money. But the plea is unconvincing. A tragedy that moves the world to sympathy can invariably be made good if money alone is needed. However, before touching upon the earthquake of 1908 it will be advisable to say something of the city as it exists to-day.

The devastated area at the time of my visit presented an extraordinary appearance. Sandwiched between new buildings might be seen the grass-covered debris of smashed houses. Frequently half a house was to be seen standing much as the earthquake had left it. The most stringent regulations are now enforced in the matter of all new structures and Government inspectors visit from time to time all buildings under construction to see that they are observed. The maximum height is twelve metres and the use of ferro-concrete is obligatory. The British Vice-Consul, who was in Messina at the time of the disaster, told me that in his opinion the buildings now going up would successfully survive an earthquake similar to that of 1908. We may hope, however, that the suggestion will not be placed to the test. For my part I was astonished, in view of the rapidly increasing price of land in Messina, that the use of steel girder construction of greater height was not permitted, since experience with such buildings in Japan

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seems to show that they withstand shocks very successfully. The effect of the wide streets and the low houses, never more than three stories high, and frequently only two, is not pleasing. However, the limit of twelve metres has not yet been increased, and it seems probable that the new Messina, which within another three years will cover every trace of the demolished city, will be a town of low but substantially constructed buildings.

Of the once interesting Cathedral practically nothing was to be seen. However, the work of reconstruction had at length started and I was informed that within three or four years the new edifice should be completed. A little of the carving saved from the debris of the old church still remains to be incorporated in the new structure, but to all intents and purposes, the Cathedral will be a new one attached to a portion of the old frontage.

The fountain of Orion in the Piazza del Duomo by Montorsoli with its allegorical representations of the Tiber, the Camaro, the Nile and the Ebro was erected in 1551. It is of interest for its workmanship and as having survived the downfall of the city in 1908.

I may perhaps add a note on the subject of the great watercourses which are a prominent feature of Messina. These river beds are usually dried up and it is difficult to appreciate the fact that they can ever be anything else. However, at certain seasons, usually December or January, these dried and parched cuttings are raging torrents.

The Harbour deserves notice as one of the most important commercially in Sicily. It is a natural harbour constituted by a projection of the land, and the facilities it affords to shipping coupled with its proximity to the mainland has probably contributed more than any other factor to the renewed life of the town.

It is difficult to mention Messina as it exists to-day without a tribute to the extraordinary energy with which the Fascist regime has faced the task of reconstruction. As I have remarked, for some years after the earthquake little was attempted and practically nothing accomplished. During the war the bricklayers and carpenters were called

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to the Colours and the period of financial depression that followed promised to leave everything as it was for a long time to come. It was only when the Fascist Government assumed power that the real work started. In fact the Fascist sign is to be seen everywhere upon the scaffolding.

The attractions of Messina are to my mind three in number, and all lie without it—the Straits, the drive to the lighthouse at the fishing village of Faro which stands at the north-east angle of the island, and the views of the Calabrian Mountains across the water. Easily the most enjoyable method of viewing the Straits is to cross to San Giovanni upon the train ferry, a trip of about twenty minutes actual steaming. San Giovanni lies slightly to the north of Messina, a fact which add a few minutes to the crossing, but increases the pleasure which it affords. The ferry boats are of considerable size and will accommodate a train of sleeping cars without difficulty; upon either side of the train the deck is built up to a level with the tops of the carriages so that the deck space is ample and the view unobstructed. The trains themselves are pushed on to the ferries with a minimum of fuss, and freight cars and passenger trains pass to and fro throughout the day, it seemed to me, without intermission. It would not of course be practicable for these boats to make the crossing even in a moderately rough sea, as something like calm conditions are required for the transhipment of rolling stock. It says a great deal for the smoothness of the Straits, therefore, that the ferry is not held up on account of weather more than once or twice in two years.

The run by car to the lighthouse, a distance of slightly under eight miles, affords a pleasant view of the Straits, and terminates at the historic spot where Scylla faces the site of the vanished whirlpool of Charybdis. In these days it is the fashion to smile at the terrors with which ancient mariners endowed this piece of water, the more so since there is no record of this whirlpool subsequent to Roman times. But it is necessary to recollect that the floor of the ocean has undergone considerable changes in successive earthquakes, and it is certain that the shore is no longer

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precisely what it was. In short, navigation through the Straits may at one time have been quite as perilous as it was believed to be. Some idea of the havoc which an earthquake may make in such a site can be gathered from the accounts of the earthquake of February, 1783. On that occasion the Prince of Scylla persuaded his vassals to take to their boats, but the sea suddenly rose more than twenty feet and foamed over the land, then retreating it returned with greater violence. Every boat was sunk or dashed against the beach and the prince and 1,430 of his people were lost. Lyell says ¹ of the earthquake of 1783 that: 'Grimaldi states (and the account is confirmed by Hamilton and others) that at Messina, in Sicily, the shore was rent; and the soil along the port, which before the shock was perfectly level, was found afterwards to be inclined towards the sea—the sea itself near the "Branchia" becoming deeper, and its bottom in several places disordered.'

It is quite reasonable to suppose, therefore, that the whirlpool of Charybdis may have disappeared as a result of some submarine convulsion very many years ago.

Shortly before reaching the lighthouse the road skirts the two salt lakes of Pantani. Even in Roman times these lakes were renowned for shell-fish and eels, commodities which the natives still secure from them. The fish caught in these lakes, however, are not edible. The lakes are owned locally and are let out in allotments, as one might say, the boundaries being marked by stakes. The stuffed herons which, motionless but life-like, brood over the scene, are decoys intended to attract the great hosts of migratory birds which cross the Straits at certain seasons of the year.

Beyond the view gained by ascending the lighthouse there is not much to be seen at the point, the main interest of the drive being the scenery en route and the association of this spot with Scylla and Charybdis of historic fame.

A tunnel beneath the Straits linking Messina, and through Messina all Sicily, to the mainland is not the least interesting of the many projects which successive Italian Governments have discussed from time to time. Hitherto nothing

¹ *Principles of Geology*, Vol. II.

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definite has resulted ; but the suggestion is entirely feasible, and it will be interesting to see whether the Fascist Government will take the matter in hand. It is at least certain that the magnitude of the task will not deter them from doing so. Whether the tunnel would justify the very considerable outlay involved, is another matter. The ferry system at present in force, which enables both passengers and goods to be conveyed to the island without transshipment, is not unduly expensive to run and is very rarely interfered with by weather conditions. In any event the project is of less importance to Messina than might be imagined, since goods entering the port for destinations elsewhere on the island are not handled in the town as things stand.

The comparative frequency with which Messina has been destroyed by earthquake would appear to furnish a conclusive argument against rebuilding the city upon its present site. However, the claims of its magnificent natural harbour, coupled with its proximity to the mainland, appear to be proof against every calamity.

As the reader will be aware, Calabria and Sicily have suffered from earthquakes from the earliest times and to this extent there was nothing historically exceptional about the disaster of 1908. Judged by the standard of man's lifetime, however, great disasters are so infrequent that the following notes upon the overthrow of Messina may be of interest. This is the more likely to be the case since a new generation has arisen to which the horrors of that time are mere hearsay.

The first shock of the earthquake appears to have occurred at 5.21 a.m. of the morning of December 28th, and had a duration of from thirty to forty seconds. Other shocks followed the first at intervals and fires broke out in many different parts of the city. Finally the rain descended in torrents and continued almost without intermission for weeks on end.

The impression of fugitives from such a calamity are of necessity untrustworthy. At such a time a few seconds become a long continued suspense, successive sounds blend

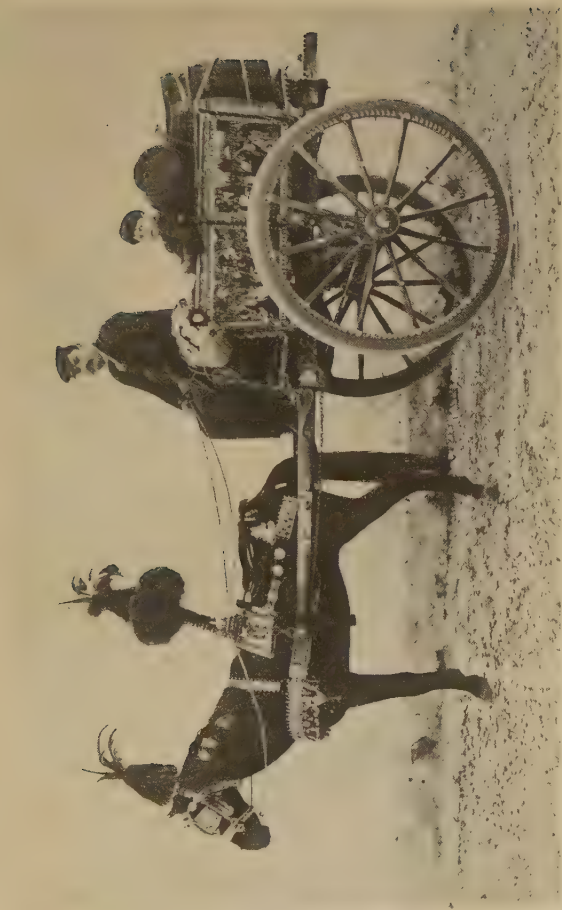
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themselves into a confused uproar, occurrences are magnified or otherwise distorted according to the emotions of the moment. Yet the accounts have their value. Possibly the dominant impression that followed upon the first cataclysmic shock was that of a prolonged thunderous noise. We must recollect that with very few exceptions these unfortunate people were asleep when the disaster took place. They awoke to find the ground moving beneath them and their houses collapsing about their heads. On all sides timbers and masonry were crashing to earth. In the darkness and uncertainty, the uproar about them appeared interminable. It was followed by shrieks, cries, blasphemies, the wail of a city entombed in the earth.

An Englishman at the Hotel Trinacria, awakened by the shock, leaped from his bed and struck a match. As the light spluttered in his hand he perceived that of the farther side of his room nothing remained. The wall, the very floor itself to the margin of the bed, had disappeared. The shock had left death upon one side of his couch and life upon the other and he had leaped in utter ignorance. He escaped. His friend and a Swede with his wife and child, occupied adjoining rooms upon the same floor. They also made their escape, lowering themselves to the ground with a rope of sheets and blankets. The Syndic of Capriolo, sleeping near the top of the house, found himself buried in the debris, unable to move hand or foot. He tore with his teeth at a curtain that lay across his head, and through the rent made his cries heard. He was dug out later. But these half a dozen persons were, I believe, the only survivors of the sixty or more guests who had slept that night in the hotel.

The walls of the prison upon the hill adjoining the Capuchin Monastery collapsed at the first shock. There were confined in the building at this time about three hundred male criminals and three hundred and fifty female prisoners. Those who were not killed immediately made their escape and spread themselves about the city to profit from the occasion.

It was the custom of the inhabitants to keep a light burning



TYPICAL SICILIAN CART

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in the halls of their houses during the night. The blazing oil spread from the smashed and overturned lamps to the timber, and countless fires broke out. Through this inferno half-demented survivors ran and fell in hopeless panic. In a moment of time an unrecognisable terrain of terror and ruin had replaced the city with which they were familiar. No circumstance that could add to the misery of these wretched people appears to have been wanting. The day had yet to dawn and the darkness of the night was made impenetrable by dust, no man knew where he was or where to turn to save himself ; the inhabitants were clad in sleeping attire and the night was a cold one ; the wrecking of the prison liberated a number of criminals who joined the scum of the population in looting ; fires broke out ; the rain fell in torrents and converted the dust and debris into mud and thick slime. Nor is this all, for many who survived the first shock were flung down by succeeding ones. It is not surprising that of those who were alive at daybreak a great number were mad.

The steamship 'Washington', bound for Messina from Palermo, was passing the lighthouse off Messina at the time of the earthquake. She reported a shock which was so severe that the captain believed for a moment he had run the ship aground. At the same time the light from the lighthouse was extinguished. Other shocks followed the first, and on approaching the port of Messina three hours later he found the sea strewn with broken fragments of boats and with dead animals. The frontage of Messina had been annihilated. Amidst mountains of debris it was possible to distinguish the walls of the Town Hall and a few remnants of houses ; bodies were seen in inaccessible places, penned in by beams or masonry and projecting from the upper stories of half-destroyed buildings. Flames were ascending from several parts of the town. The coast line was covered with deep mud flung up by the seismic waves that followed the earthquake. A dense cloud of dust hung over this scene of terror and despair.

It is not too much to say that the news of this catastrophe stirred the civilised world. From every quarter assistance

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and sympathy were forthcoming. Every nation did what it could in the fashion to which it was accustomed. The Russian battleship 'Admiral Makaroff' was off Messina at the time of the disaster and her officers and bluejackets were instrumental in saving a great number of people, often at the risk of their own lives. British battleships and cruisers arrived from Malta within a few hours of the catastrophe and dumped immense stores of tents and food upon the shore. In a fashion familiar to Englishmen, the fleet spared no time either for thanks or display, but for some days continued without intermission to ferry refugees to Syracuse and Catania. The Germans also, although in comparatively small numbers, were by no means behind other nations. It was roughly estimated that of 15,000 persons extracted alive from the ruins of Messina there were saved during the first few days 1,250 by the Russians, 1,139 by the British, and 900 by the Germans.

The American relief expedition which was organised upon a large scale appeared a little later and did valuable work in the erection of wooden houses in which great numbers of the refugees were accommodated.

What I have written is not intended to be in any sense an account of the earthquake, for which, indeed, an entire volume would scarcely suffice. I have endeavoured merely to indicate the main features of the calamity from which Messina cannot yet be said to have wholly recovered. The city had been placed under martial law within a day or so of the disaster, and upon January 8th, 1909, an effort was made to induce the remaining refugees to leave the ruins by stopping the rations which had been issued to them up to this date. There was in fact a serious risk of disease from the great number of corpses interned in the debris.

A special correspondent of *The Times*, who visited Messina on January 7th, paints a moving picture of the scene as it appeared at that date: ' . . . And over all was the same awful silence. I did not see one hundred refugees. There are about two thousand left who mostly sleep in ships in the harbour, while perhaps six thousand are on the hills behind the town. The rest are dead or have fled. Or

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they are dying. The crowning horror is the belief, nay certainty, that under some of these hideous masses of fallen bricks and stone are human beings who are slowly perishing. Three more persons were dug out alive to-day. It were best not to dwell on the thought of the others, for to save more than a very few is impossible.'

The population of the city at the time of the earthquake can only be given approximately, estimates varying from one hundred and twenty thousand for the city itself to one hundred and sixty-eight thousand for Messina with its suburbs ; the actual number of those who perished at that time will never be known, the estimates range from seventy thousand to eighty-five thousand persons.

CHAPTER X

CATANIA

EXCEPT as a railway junction, Catania has little or nothing to offer the tourist, who will be well advised to spare his time for more interesting places. The hotels are not of the best, and even were they otherwise there would be small reason to use them. I have seen it suggested that the town would make an admirable place at which to break the long journey from Syracuse to Girgenti or vice versa. But Catania is no more than two, or two and a half, hours by rail from Syracuse, whereas the journey from Girgenti to Syracuse occupies something like eight, or eight and a half, hours. On the principle that one may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, the tourist will probably elect to remain in his carriage.

From the point of view of the business man, the case is, of course, very different, Catania being the centre of the chief wine-producing province of the island and boasting the largest population of any Sicilian city, Palermo alone excepted. Perhaps it is inevitable in the circumstances that the streets of the town should be thronged with busy people and that the buildings should wear a modern aspect. Such old buildings as have escaped the earthquakes and the lava are mainly Roman. As Sladen remarks: 'Catania has fine streets, but they are cosmopolitan rather than Sicilian or even Italian . . . the principal streets of Catania are undeniably fine, but the plaster work is so unpleasantly florid.'

The Roman amphitheatre in the Piazza Stesicoro, of which a considerable portion has been uncovered, is perhaps the most interesting of the historic sites in the city. In its day it was one of the largest Roman amphitheatres in the world, but it is structurally less complete than the amphitheatre at Syracuse and, except for the blocks of lava used as pillars, far less interesting.

The Cathedral commenced by Roger I in 1091, was almost

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completely destroyed by earthquake in 1169, and the present building, dating from 1763, is not particularly noteworthy. The tomb of Saint Agatha and the golden crown set with jewels presented to the Saint by King Richard of England, are of interest for widely different reasons. St. Agatha, as the reader will probably be aware, is the patron Saint of Catania, and, as is usual in such cases, is supposed to have died a maiden after enduring tortures too terrible for description. In this instance the villain of the piece is said to have been a Roman Governor whose attentions Saint Agatha disdained, preferring mutilation and a death over red-hot coals. I have always found it difficult to understand why monkish historians so greatly esteemed the state of virginity, but I have never ceased to admire the determined spirit which induced them to add these examples to precept. However, the fame of St. Agatha has rested for some time upon a more intelligible basis, for in the opinion of the rank and file of the townspeople it is due to this Saint that Catania has repeatedly escaped destruction. Etna, so picturesque to the tourist is to the Catanian a never-ceasing menace. There have been times when the volcano has awakened, and when the shrine of St. Agatha has appeared the only barrier against the lava. And when the menace has passed and the least important dwelling of Catania still stands untouched, is it any wonder that the townswoman pays her tribute to the Saint who stooped to her hour of need?

The gift crown credited to King Richard may very possibly have originated with the English King. Richard, it will be remembered, was a brother of Joan who married William II of Sicily. Richard, again, personally visited the island en route to the Crusades. Such circumstances go far to explain this valuable gift to a Saint unheard of by the majority of English people.

The elephant of lava which faces the Cathedral was discovered in the Roman amphitheatre, but it is not known why it was erected there in the first place or what event, if any, it commemorates.

As I have said, Catania is essentially a successful commercial

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town with little to offer the tourist beyond its busy streets. It contains a few ruins at which we may gaze in passing, but its secret, at once beautiful and terrible, lies thirty miles away. For it is Etna that from time immemorial has controlled the fortunes of this spot. Perhaps the most disastrous of the many eruptions from which Catania has suffered was that of 1669. On this occasion the walls of Catania were raised with the definite intention of holding back the flood of lava which had already covered fourteen towns and villages, some with a population of between three and four thousand inhabitants. But the burning flood accumulated till it rose to the top of the rampart, which was 60 feet in height, and then fell in a fiery cascade and overwhelmed part of the city.

‘This great current’, writes Lyell,¹ ‘performed the first thirteen miles of its course in twenty days, or at the rate of one hundred and sixty-two feet per hour, but required twenty-three days for the last two miles, giving a velocity of only twenty-two feet per hour ; and we learn from Dolomieu that the stream moved during part of its course at the rate of 1,500 feet an hour, and in others took several days to cover a few yards.’

It was during the 1669 eruption, according to tradition, that the Catanians spread the veil of St. Agatha across the path of the advancing lava, which, as though miraculously guided, turned towards the harbour. I may remark here, parenthetically, that lava flung out of Etna in the eruption of December, 1908, was still hot in April, 1927.

But like every inhabitant of every volcanic area, the Catanian prefers the glowing lava to the earthquake, the danger that may be seen and perhaps evaded to the danger that lurks no one can say where. The eruption of 1693 was as nothing to that of 1669 but the earthquake that accompanied it laid low the greater part of the city and killed, it is supposed, about 18,000 of the inhabitants. During the great earthquake of December, 1908, which practically destroyed Messina and Reggio, Catania suffered little if at all.

¹ *Principles of Geology.*

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Those who visit Sicily during the summer months when the snow has had time to melt upon the sides of Etna may, if they choose, essay an ascent of the mountain from Catania. The route usually chosen lies through Nicolosi, where guides are taken and the ascent really commences, to the Casa del Bosco. I did not myself attempt the climb and cannot speak from experience, but those who have gained the summit of the volcano have little to say in its favour.

‘The crater itself I have never been lucky enough to see with any real clearness’, remarks Hutton. ‘The wind and the cold numb the intelligence. One is conscious of a vast cone rolling up and over into an unthinkable abyss which I was told was now divided into two parts. . . . It was not possible to remain in such a place for long nor in fact was it worth the discomfort and the uneasiness it caused one after the weariness of the way.’

Etna, which has raised itself and the surrounding country from the floor of the Mediterranean, attains a height of 10,758 feet. Lyell tells us that it is an older volcano than Vesuvius, and in fact was in eruption prior to the Glacial period in Northern Europe. The changes wrought in the surrounding country by successive eruptions have been of course prodigious. Tracts of land at one time covered by timber or grass are now areas of lava. On the other hand, the decomposed volcanic soil is extraordinarily fertile, so that the arrest and stimulation of vegetable growth moves, as it were, in cycles over a vast period of time. The Circum-Etna Railway from Catania affords many extremely interesting views of the base and even of the higher parts of the mountain, and a journey upon it is for all practical purposes as close an acquaintance with Mount Etna as the visitor will desire.



TEMPLE OF CONCORD, GIRGENTI

PART II

CHAPTER I

THE DORIC TEMPLE

THE Doric temples of Greece and Sicily have for many years been universally admired both for their dignity and their apparent simplicity, and upon both grounds the tribute paid them is well deserved. Seen in their proper setting they impress us even to-day as few more modern structures are able to do ; yet this effect of pride and grandeur is achieved at a minimum expenditure of effort.

The history of these temples is a curious one. Of all of them it may be said that they once constituted the especial pride of some great city. But in the course of time the city fell, to man or to nature, and the temples, their day of glory past, stood neglected and often in solitude. Like the last survivors of a race of mammoths, they were preyed upon. Through the long night of the middle ages man attacked them, carried them away piecemeal. Then they are discovered afresh by archaeologists and scholars of every sort. Once again they become objects of universal admiration. Writers of every continent comment upon them and they are visited by thousands of every race and creed. Theirs has indeed been a strange destiny. The Greek loved them for their beauty, but still more, we think, for what they represented, the glory of his country and the stability of his faith ; it is only to-day that in their great age, crippled and broken, they are admired for what they were and still are.

In all these circumstances it is natural that we should feel some curiosity regarding the origin and significance of a style of architecture at once so simple and so true. But before dealing briefly with questions which are still in dispute, and as to which no evidence that we may consider conclusive will ever be forthcoming, it will be interesting to

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note some of the more outstanding features of the Doric Temple.

We have here no arches and no spires, the window, even where it existed, can have contributed nothing to the general effect; such walls as there were most frequently almost invisible from without and the nature of the roof, and the extent to which it admitted light, is still in dispute. It is difficult to imagine a structure more dissimilar from any for which we ourselves can find a use. Yet these temples do not strike us as bizarre or in any way curious. It is not to be supposed, however, that the grand aspect of these buildings is an affair of chance or even the inevitable effect of a simple and logical design. On the contrary they embody calculations so minute that even to-day we can scarcely claim to have learned their secret.

Fergusson likens the refinements of Greek architecture to the intricate harmonies of music, and adds that the eyes of the Greeks were as perfectly educated as our ears.

‘They could appreciate harmonies which are lost in us, and were offended at false quantities which our duller senses fail to perceive. But in spite of ourselves, we do feel the beauty of these harmonic relations, though we hardly know why; and if educated to them, we might acquire what might almost be considered a new sense. But be this as it may, there can be no doubt but that a great deal of the beauty which all feel in contemplating the architectural productions of the Greeks, arises from causes such as these, which we are only now beginning to appreciate.’

This amazing attention to detail reaches its zenith in the Parthenon where the exact measurements made by Mr. F. C. Penrose, F.R.S., establish the fact that the design provided not merely for an almost meticulous accuracy in detail but took into account the most insignificant effects of optical illusion. A long horizontal straight line, with a number of vertical lines resting upon it, appears to the eye to sink slightly in the middle and to rise towards the ends. This error is corrected by giving the top step or stylobate a slight curve. Again, ‘the columns of the Parthenon have shafts that are over thirty-four feet high and diminish from

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a diameter of 6.15 feet at the bottom to 4.81 feet at the top. The outline between these points is convex, but so slightly so that the curve departs at the point of greatest curvature not more than three-quarters of an inch from the straight line joining the top and bottom. This is, however, just sufficient to correct the tendency to look hollow in the middle.'¹

Prof. Ernest Gardner having remarked on the precision of design and mechanical skill in execution that characterises the Parthenon throughout, adds: ' . . . nothing, however, but a careful study of the forms will suffice to show the extraordinary degree of perfection in working marble that they imply. . . . The same loving care in detail that elsewhere produces infinite variety is here subordinated to the systematic perfection of the whole; but its presence is none the less perceptible in the subtle and appropriate curve of every outline and moulding.'²

The Parthenon was completed in 438 B.C., the Doric temples of Girgenti somewhere between 500 and 400 B.C., the Temple of Jupiter, of which the design differed from that of any other Greek temple of its time, was commenced in 480 B.C., but remained unfinished when the city was destroyed by the Carthaginians seventy-five years later. The more or less provincial art of the Greek colonies in Sicily, however, did not attain to the same level as the Athenian art of the time and it cannot be contended that the temples at Girgenti vie with the Parthenon in perfection.

By some writers the year 480 B.C. has been taken as the beginning of a period of transition from the archaic style to the perfection of Doric architecture as exemplified in the Parthenon. This movement reached its consummation upon the mainland but was checked in Sicily by the disasters that overwhelmed the island. The temples at Girgenti, with the greater number of those at Selinunte and the temple at Segesta belong to this period. None the less these temples embody the principles of Doric art and remain a visible proof of their eternal truth.

¹ *Architecture. Classic. Early Christian, etc.* By Prof. T. Roger Smith, F.R.I.B.A.

² Ancient Athens.

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What to my mind is extremely significant is the fact that the Greek temple was undoubtedly designed to produce a maximum effect from without. Every part of the building is planned and fashioned to that end and the interior is only what it could be after this prime requirement had been satisfied. This fact seems to suggest that the Greek regarded the temple less as the scene of worship than as the symbol of his faith. It would probably be a mistake to press this point too far, but if, as seems certain, the Greek attached more importance to the exterior of the building than to the interior, it is a fair inference that the exterior which, in its main lines, was always more or less the same, had assumed a certain significance which the architects of the day could not disregard. This, however, is a point to which I will recur.

That the Doric Temple impresses us to-day by some quality of dignity or logic inherent in its design is unquestionable, but we may legitimately doubt whether the temple as we see it is one that the ancient Greek would recognise. To him, we think, the temple was the sum total of many factors, some of which we may view as things apart and of which others are lost to us for ever. The metopes, for instance, filled a certain part in the general design and doubtless bore some relationship of form to the sculptures upon the pediment. The entire building in fact was a harmony. But although we may fortunately appreciate this fact it rarely happens that we can see the metopes and other sculptures in their proper relationship towards the structure as a whole. They may delight us of themselves upon the walls of a museum but their contribution towards the collective appeal of the temple is lost to us. The effect of colour is lost altogether. We know that the temples were brightly coloured, but we cannot visualise the effect these colours produced. Again, we have no trace of a roof although it is certain that the structure included one. More than one theory has been advanced as to the manner in which the interior was lighted. The suggestion that a portion at least of the roof was composed of slabs of translucent marble is a reasonable one, but it is equally, or even more, probable that the only lighting was by way of the

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open door. We cannot prove anything. And finally, the treasures these temples contained, the bronze statue of Hercules of which the chin was worn by the kisses of his worshippers, how can we ever know the part they played in the spiritual vision of the Greek?

But such thoughts serve merely to deflect our curiosity into fresh channels. It is inevitable we should ask ourselves where the Doric Temple came from and how far it represented the character of the Greeks themselves. Upon both points it is possible to hold conflicting opinions in good company. There are many authorities who maintain that this style of architecture in its inspiration, if not in actual detail, reached Greece from Egypt or elsewhere; others see in the Doric temple the principles of an early form of timber construction adapted to the employment of stone.

Fergusson remarks almost contemptuously that 'the fact of a proto-Doric order having existed in Egypt a thousand years before it is found in Greece ought to suffice as explaining the origin of the style'. However, it is fortunately possible to record a coincidence far more remarkable, for we now know that a number of finds in Peru bear an amazing resemblance to discoveries at Mycenae.¹ It is true that certain authorities would explain this fact by the possibility that Egyptian seamen carried Egyptian culture to distant lands from which in the course of time it reached

¹ At Cuzco in Peru, near Lake Titacaca and the Bolivian frontier, formerly the seat of the Inca Kings. Mr. Andreas Michalopoulos, who has visited this spot, informs me '... Though not far from the equator the height makes its climate very temperate and similar to that of Greece. The Inca remains similar to the Mycenaean are: in Architecture, the great walls of roughly hewn stone, and in Sculpture the astonishing reproduction of the mountain lion which appears over the gateway at Mycenae.' He also instances gold cups, bronze implements and ornaments, geometric pottery and embroidery as exhibiting 'a striking similarity' to finds at Mycenae. Mr. Michalopoulos concludes 'The deduction I draw is that given a similar climate, similar geographical dispositions and I suppose similar anthropological bases, you may get a similar development of civilisation in any two countries at any two periods of time.'

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countries of which the Egyptians had no knowledge. But it is more easy to believe that this fact, astounding as it may be, is nothing more than the logical result of two similar but unrelated processes of development, and if such is the case we cannot ignore a similar possibility in the case of Egypt and Greece.

Freeman finds support for the 'timber development' view in the shape of the Doric column, without a base and tapering like the trunk of a tree driven into the ground, and not less in what he terms 'that marked distinctness of parts, that completeness of each part in itself'.¹

However, too great reliance should not be placed upon any argument based upon the shape of the column. For the development of the column within Greece was not from the tapering to the squat but the reverse. The columns at Corinth are considerably shorter and had a diameter greater in proportion to their height than the columns of succeeding temples. In short the development in form was not from that of the wooden post outwards but from a comparatively short and heavy column towards greater attenuation, a fact from which Fergusson implies that 'the pillar was originally a pier of brickwork or of rubble masonry, supporting a wooden roof'.

I cannot see, however, that the overthrow of the 'tree trunk' argument necessarily destroys the theory that the Doric Temple is a development in stone of an original erection in timber. It is scarcely to be expected that the early stone masons would be competent to fashion a tall and tapering column. The virtue of the wooden post was the support it rendered to the roof, and the builders at the time of the change, which in any event was probably a gradual process spread over many years, would be primarily concerned to secure similar service from stone or rubble. Shape was probably only a secondary consideration. In the course of time as architects set themselves a higher standard and stone-masons acquired greater proficiency, the column would become longer and more shapely and thus approximate, although unintentionally, its timber forbear.

¹ *History of Architecture.*

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‘Could anything be more natural,’ writes Müller, ‘than that the long surface of the principal beams should be imitated in stone, that the cross-beams with the Doric triglyph should be laid over these, the intervals or metopes being by degrees covered with marble, whilst the cornice, in imitation of carpenter’s work, was allowed to project in relief.’¹

Unfortunately it will not be possible within the space which we can devote to the matter even to outline the main arguments of this very interesting inquiry. We must be content to indicate the nature of the contention itself, which, put briefly, is that we have in the Doric Temple the type of structure we should expect to find if we knew as a fact that the early Dorian invaders were induced by the stone buildings which they found in Greece to reproduce in stone the temples they had previously erected in timber.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that the early builders were concerned merely to perpetuate a form of structure which had proved itself eminently satisfactory for the purpose it had to serve, and if that was the case we can see that they would gradually adopt brick or stone in preference to timber because it was more durable and would vary the general design only when the use of brick or stone made some variation inevitable, and only then if the general usefulness of the building would not be affected by the change.

In short it seems to me more reasonable that the Doric stone temple should be a development of a pre-existing timber temple than that it should be the Grecian development of a style of architecture borrowed from a foreign country and an alien religion.

What is possibly a question of more general interest is the extent to which the Doric temple represented the Greek mentality or character. Unhappily eminent authorities when touching upon this point almost invariably take it for granted that the one was the product of the other, and fail to offer us the strong arguments by which presumably they themselves were influenced. ‘The Doric character’,

¹ Müller’s *Dorians*, II.

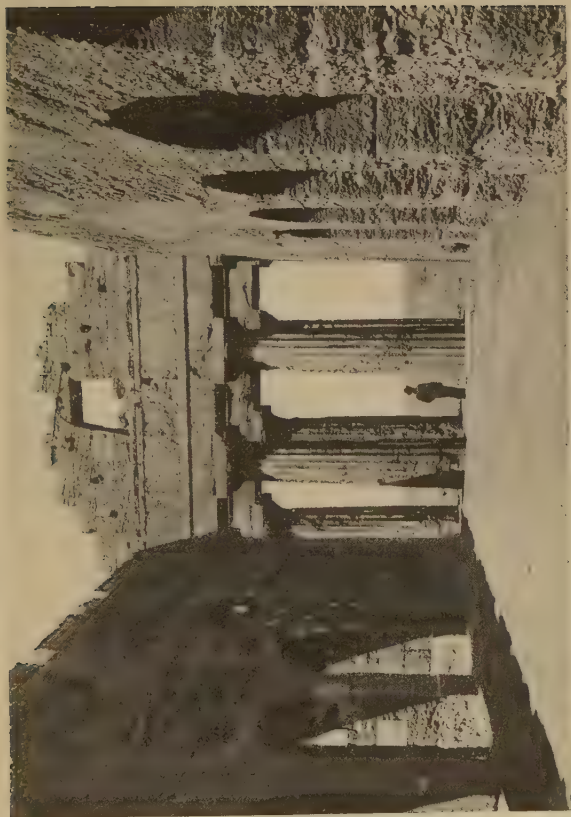
SICILY PRESENT AND PAST

Müller observes, 'created the Doric architecture.' Freeman speaks of Doric architecture as 'the appropriate product of the Dorian mind and temper', and again '... this simplicity, this definiteness, this tendency to clothe everything with a garb of sensible humanity, is most thoroughly in unison with the Grecian character.'

Finally we may instance Gregorovius, whose opinion as an eminent scholar and historian cannot lightly be disregarded. 'In contemplating a Doric Temple, the traveller cannot refrain from observing to what grand and simple rhythmic measures the life of the Greeks must have moved, when the collective national sentiment . . . could be represented in such form.'

It may be the case that this is so, but is it not possible that we permit our enthusiasm for Greek architecture somewhat to bias our judgment where the Greeks themselves are concerned? To my mind the marvel of these temples is that anything so collectively logical could emanate from a people so temperamentally unreliable. The history of Athens prior to the construction of the temples upon the Acropolis is certainly not that of a race in which dignity and logic were outstanding qualities. As to the Greeks of Acragas, we know that they were prosperous, hospitable and unwarlike. They amassed considerable wealth which left to themselves they lacked the courage to defend. Their collective policy, as was perhaps necessary in those uncertain days, was essentially an opportunist one. In short one looks in vain to the history of Athens or Acragas for any support to this pleasing theory.

It is, of course, vastly more intriguing to see in a Doric temple the embodiment of the national character rather than the product of custom and the association of ideas, and it is not to be anticipated that the more interesting theory will be lightly overthrown. None the less it may interest the reader amidst the peaceful delights of Girgenti to ponder a few of the difficulties. We may admit at once that although it is just possible to conceive of an architect erecting at the public expense a religious edifice entirely repugnant to the people who would make use of it, it is



INTERIOR OF TEMPLE OF CONCORD, CIRGENTI

THE DORIC TEMPLE

impossible to believe that such a building would continue in uninterrupted use over hundreds of years. It is not to be supposed from this that the Greek temple was never varied in form. On the contrary the Doric style developed into the Ionic and the Ionic was followed by the Corinthian. But this tendency, a tendency towards the increasingly ornate, represented merely the accumulation of those slight improvements, real or fancied, which successive architects felt themselves free to make. At no time was the departure from the accepted idea sufficiently radical to arouse comment. We must grant, therefore, that the Greek temple was the type of structure which the mass of the people considered fitting and proper to the exercise of their religion. But it does not follow from this that the temple would represent the Greek character.

It will scarcely be disputed that a man's character is reflected in his clothes or his house, and possibly where he has several religions to choose from, in his choice of a religion. But where, as in the case of the ancient Greek, he is brought up in the exercise of a particular religion and has learned from his childhood days to associate the exercise of that religion with a particular form of building, he will usually accept the one and the other more or less without question. To the Greek, the Greek temple was a part of the Greek faith. If he believed, he would resent a change ; if he had ceased to believe he would not trouble with the matter. In no circumstances would he advocate a departure from the accepted order of things. How, then, was a change to come about ?

It may, of course, be argued that the Greek Temple typified a national character which remained unchanged in its essentials throughout the history of the race. But we doubt if such an argument could be supported by facts. Again, when mention is made of the Greek character, is the reference to the character of the Athenian, or the Spartan or the Corinthian, or is it suggested that the character of the one was the character of the other ? We know it was not.

The character of the Greek was not the same in Athens

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as it was in Sparta. On the other hand the Greek religion remained for very many years the common heritage of all Greece and while the Greek religion remained unchanged the temples which embodied that faith in visible form developed, not unnaturally, within sharply defined limits.

It is indeed very doubtful to my mind whether there is the slightest substance in the resemblance which historians have affected to find between the lines of the Doric temple and the attributes of the Greek character. Such efforts are at once fanciful and misleading. Only in history, and not always there, can we read the character of any nation.

The following table, showing in dimensions the principal characteristics of the Sicilian temples, will probably interest the reader as affording a basis for comparison. I have included the Parthenon as representing the highest standard 'in proportions' ever attained in this form of architecture. For, as the reader will be aware, the beauty of the Doric temple did not lie in its size, but in the harmony of one part with another. The figures given may not always be accepted as absolutely accurate, but are most probably relatively so. A more detailed and comprehensive table upon similar lines will be found by those interested in the work of Messrs. Anderson & Spiers.

DORIC TEMPLES IN SICILY

Place	Temple	COLUMNS					STYLOBATE		Approximate Date of Construction
		In front	At side	Height	DIAMETER		Width	Length	
					Lower	Upper			
SYRACUSE	APOLLO	6	19	26 10	6 0	5 0	72 0	172 6	B.C. 580-570
	OLYMPION	6	17	—	5 10	—	72 8	204 4	575
SELINUNTE	C	6	17	28 3	6 3	4 11	78 5	208 0	575
	D	6	13	24 8	5 6	3 9	76 0	183 0	570-560
	F	6	14	29 10	6 0	4 0	79 9	204 8	550
	G	8	17	53 4	11 2	6 3	166 0	360 5	540-460
GIRGENTI	HERCULES	6	15	33 0	6 11½	4 10	83 7	221 0	510-500
	E	6	15	33 4	7 3	5 10	83 0	224 2	490
SELINUNTE	A	6	14	20 5	4 5	3 6	53 2	131 3	500-480
	OLYMPION	7	14	61 9	13 0	10 6	173 3	386 9	480-440
SEGESTA	JUNO	6	13	21 2	4 7½	3 6	55 9	124 11	450-440
	CERES	6	14	30 9	6 5	4 0	76 6	190 9	430-420
SYRACUSE	ATHENA	6	14	28 11	6 2	5 0	74 0	185 0	420-400
GIRGENTI	CONCORD	6	13	22 1	4 8	3 8	55 9	129 11	400
	CASTOR & POLLUX	6	13	21 2	3 10½	—	42 0	102 0	340-330
ATHENS	PARTHENON	8	17	34 3	6 3	4 9	101 4	228 1	454-438

CHAPTER II

ANCIENT SYRACUSE

GELON—HIMERA AND THE DEATH OF HAMILCAR—THE ATHENIAN INVASION

GELON. The first Greek settlers had arrived in Sicily in the seventh century B.C., but invaders of more than one nationality had preceded them. The earliest inhabitants of the island, the Sicans, who came from no one can say where, had been followed in the course of time by the Sicels from the mainland, and, still later, Phoenician traders had appeared upon the scene.

The first Greek colony to take root in Sicily arrived from Chalcis and settled itself at Naxos from whence it spread southward to Catane (Catania) and northwards to the north-east corner of the island. The invasion of the Dorian Greeks occurred some years later, when Archias founded the first Corinthian colony in Syracuse (*circ.* 734 B.C.)

Such opposition as the Greeks met with appears to have come mainly from the Sicels. The newcomers, however, were sufficiently strong to maintain their hold upon the eastern shore of the island and even to found colonies upon the seaboard to the west, so that eventually the Sicans and Sicels alike retreated to the interior of the island where the invaders were loth to follow them. The Phoenician traders had retired to the western coast and it does not appear that they offered any particular opposition to the encroaching Greeks.

The Greek colonies in Sicily continued to prosper until by 500 B.C. Syracuse, under the rule of Gelon had become the greatest power in the island. During these years, however, there had developed upon the African seaboard a Phoenician colony which, as Carthage, was destined to exercise a potent influence over Sicilian affairs for very many years to come.

Gelon had occupied Syracuse by right of conquest, but

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once there he identified himself with the City. A mole connecting Ortygia, as the island was called, with the mainland had already been constructed, but Gelon built a defensive wall which ran from Ortygia almost due north to the Bay of Thapsos, taking in all Achradina. Thus the city by this time far exceeded the limits of the island. Indeed the city limits were now so extensive that Gelon could only find a population for greater Syracuse by forcibly transporting people from elsewhere. Amongst other cities, his own town of Gela lost half its inhabitants in this fashion. In addition new settlers were procured from Greece itself and citizenship was granted to 10,000 mercenary soldiers. Whatever we may think of his methods, it can scarcely be disputed that Gelon accomplished a truly remarkable feat. To produce within a year or two so vast a city, to people it on such a scale and to accomplish all this by purely artificial means, was the achievement of no ordinary brain. As it happened, however, the presence of Gelon in the island proved an extremely fortunate fact for the Greeks of Sicily.

About this time, in the Eastern Mediterranean, Xerxes was preparing his great expedition for the overthrow of Greece, and it was probably at his instigation that the Persian expedition against Hellas was paralleled by a Carthaginian expedition against Sicily. It was entirely in Persian interests that Gelon and his friends should find their hands occupied when Greece signalled for help. At any rate, whether by chance or design, the Carthaginian fleet landed a great armament at Panormus at a moment very convenient to Xerxes.

The Carthaginians, it is said, numbered 300,000 men, who were conveyed in 200 galleys and 3,000 transports. This formidable force under the command of Hamilcar made its appearance off Himera (480 B.C.), a Greek city upon the northern shores of the island, a spot to-day slightly to the east of Palermo. Himera, at this moment, was held by Theron, ruler of Acragas, who was closely connected with Gelon by marriage, and Gelon without loss of time marched with a Syracusan army to the rescue. The ensuing battle was long and desperate, but the victory was complete. The

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great expedition was utterly routed, Hamilcar, so the story goes, flung himself into a sacrificial fire; the invasion was at an end. Carthage, accepting the situation, concluded a treaty of peace and paid an indemnity.

Gelon died shortly after the great victory of Himera, leaving his Empire to his brothers Hieron and Polyzalus, the latter of whom was driven into exile by the former. The reader familiar with Delphi, however, will be interested to note that it was Gelon who presented the prophetic shrine with the golden tripod made from Punic treasures and Polyzalus who presented the famous statue of a Charioteer. These presents from Sicily to Apollo of Delphi assist us to realise the close connection that existed between the Greeks of early Syracuse and those of the mainland.

For some years after the battle of Himera, Syracuse was at the height of its fame. Hieron, although by no means so great a man as Gelon, was equal to his responsibilities, and it was not until his death in 467 B.C. and the advent to power of his brother Thrasybulus, that the government of the State became unstable. Thrasybulus was not equipped either with the necessary character or ability to withstand that unwritten law which in Greek history limited a tyranny to the third generation, and when the citizens rose *en masse* and, with the assistance of other Sicilian cities, drove him from Syracuse, he accepted the situation without unnecessary argument and retired abroad. There followed civil war, republican government and the gradual concentration of power in the hands of a democracy.

Many of the great temples and aqueducts of Syracuse, Girgenti, and other places, were erected in this period between the victory of Himera, 480 B.C. and 450 B.C. It is interesting that whether in Sicily or Greece or elsewhere we rarely find any great undertaking that was conceived and carried through in the later days of a democracy. Almost invariably the great monuments of past ages were erected by despotic rulers, or at best were carried to completion when the dawn of democratic rule appeared to promise a new heaven and a new earth. For the end of all democracies is the same.

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The Athenian Invasion. The Athenian expedition against Syracuse (415 B.C.) which will be vividly recalled to the mind of the visitor who gazes for the first time across this wonderful harbour, originated in a feud between two Greek cities comparatively remote from Syracuse itself, Segesta and Selinus, the latter of which was assisted by Syracuse. Segesta, as the reader will be aware, lies a little over twenty miles to the west of Palermo, and Selinus about an equal distance almost due south of Segesta. But these cities figure scarcely at all in the epic contest. The Athenian effort from first to last concentrated upon the capture of Syracuse.

At this time Athens was easily the greatest naval power in Greece, and although a renewal of the contest with Sparta was everywhere seen to be inevitable, a truce existed at the moment. Accustomed to the daily stimulus of warlike tidings, Athens enthusiastically welcomed the prospect of this distant and intriguing adventure. Envoys were dispatched to report upon the situation and in due course these men returned with stories, which were quite untrue, of the immense riches to be found in Segesta.

The two foremost politicians in Athens at this time were Nicias, slow, cautious but honest and Alcibiades, brilliant, impetuous but unreliable. Nicias opposed the proposed expedition because its result was at best uncertain, and because it could scarcely fail to weaken the resources which Athens would need in the inevitable fight-to-a-finish with Sparta. Alcibiades supported the expedition because a gamble appealed to him and, no less, because he was inclined to accept as true the report of fabulous wealth to be won in Sicily. Alcibiades carried the day, and in due course the expedition sailed under the command of Nicias, Alcibiades, and a fighting soldier by name Lamachus.

The choice of three equal commanders, differing entirely in character and outlook and by temperament hostile to each other, could only have eventuated in a democracy which found it essential to placate all shades of public opinion.

Unfortunately it will not be possible to follow the fortunes of this expedition in detail. Some few facts must, however,

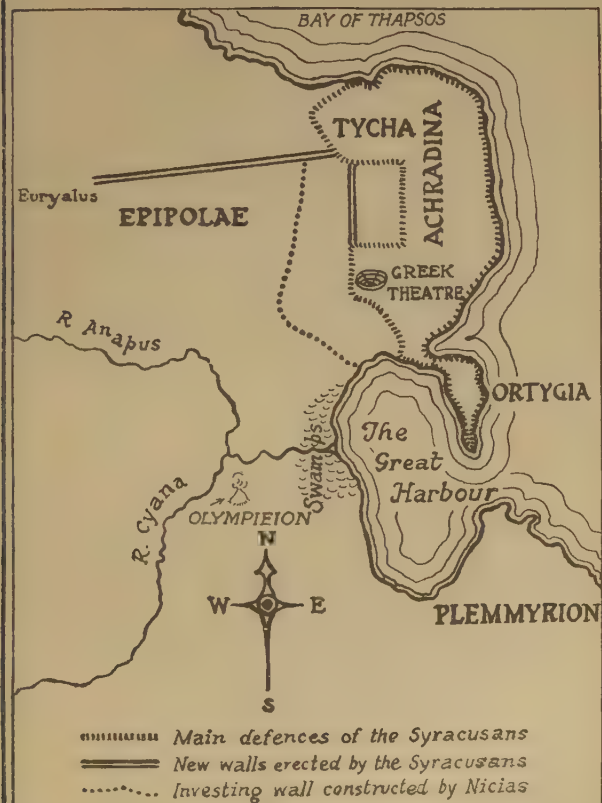
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be stated if the great naval battle of Syracuse is to be intelligible. The expedition soon lost two of its original commanders, Alcibiades taking to flight on his way to Athens whither he was recalled to answer certain charges, and Lamachus falling in battle. Thus the full responsibility for an adventure which he had opposed from the outset devolved upon the unfortunate Nicias.

As we have noticed, Syracuse had expanded under Gelon far beyond the island of Ortygia, although this island remained as it were the heart of the city. The entire city, however, was overlooked by the crest of the long hill, known as the Epipolae which dominated the north side of the great harbour. The Achradina, which stands between the Epipolae and the sea, had been rendered secure against attack from the mainland by a defensive wall and further walls enclosed Tycha, to the north-west of the city. But the crest of Epipolae remained outside the Syracusan defences and marked the scene of the fiercest fighting. The plan of Nicias embraced the construction of a wall southwards across this hill and then eastwards to the waters of the great harbour, so that except by water, where it was only reasonable to suppose the Athenians would be supreme, Syracuse would be entirely isolated.

The failure of the Athenian plans may be credited to the lack of morale which soon showed itself amongst their forces and still more to the military genius of the Spartan Gylippus and the Syracusan Hermocrates. Nothing displays more forcibly the military reputation of Sparta than the reception accorded to Gylippus. In her hour of need Syracuse had appealed to Sparta for aid and Sparta had sent *one General*. Yet his presence in Syracuse with a miscellaneous force which he had recruited in Italy turned despair into hope and hope into victory. Nicias, unfortunately for his reputation, had failed to complete his wall at its northern end, and through this gap in the investing lines the Spartan General and his force entered the city. From this moment the Athenians moved from one disaster to another. To such a pass did things come that Nicias, the unwilling commander of the greatest expeditionary force Athens had ever

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equipped, begged leave to withdraw his army and sail for home.

However, Athens was in no mood for caution. With the courage of a gambler who could not afford to lose, the city doubled the stakes, and a second expedition was sent out in charge of Eurymedon and Demosthenes.

The first expedition under Nicias, Alcibiades and Lamachus, had consisted, Thucydides tell us, of 134 triremes and a great number of smaller vessels carrying 30,000 soldiers. The new army which sailed in 73 triremes was scarcely less formidable. But the Athenians were to discover that mere numbers and equipment are as nothing without faith, and the Athenian no longer believed either in his cause or in himself. Had the Athenian army been imbued with the proper spirit one half this force would probably have sufficed. As things were, twice this strength would have been too little. Eurymedon and Demosthenes were generals of proved merit. Nicias himself was a force by no means to be despised. But the army, old and new, was imbued with the desire to liquidate the entire business. And while doubt and discontent stalked to and fro in the Athenian camp, the ardour and courage of the beleaguered Syracusans increased daily.

Eurymedon and Demosthenes on their arrival with the second armada found the position far from reassuring. The great harbour had proved big enough to enable the Syracusans to attack in all manner of ways, but it was still too small to allow the Athenians to fight their fleet in the fashion to which they were accustomed. The Athenian ships were designed for warfare in the open sea. It was the habit of the Athenian seamen to row round their enemy and to attack them from the side. The Syracusans, on the other hand, adapted their more handy vessels to the circumstances with which they had to deal, and strengthened the prow, enabling them to meet the Athenians bow on with great advantage. For in the harbour, thronged with ships, there was but limited room in which to manœuvre. Thus, although the Athenians had repelled a land attack, they had had considerably the worse of an encounter on the water.

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Things were indeed in a desperate plight. Plemmyrion had been captured by the Syracusans, who thus held both sides of the entrance to the Great Harbour, and reinforcements had reached the defenders from Camarina and Gela. For, as Thucydides tells us, 'Hitherto the Sicilian cities had only watched the course of events, but now the whole island, with the exception of Acragas, which was neutral, united with the Syracusans against the Athenians.'

None the less, Eurymedon had a very powerful fleet under his command, and he had secured in Italy some valuable reinforcements in the shape of heavily armed soldiers and javelin-men. Demosthenes also had not been idle, and when the two parties of the armada had united and had reached Syracuse in safety, they formed with the ships and men under Nicias a force of extraordinary strength. This was the psychological moment and Demosthenes hastened to seize it. For an instant hope flickered again amongst the dispirited troops of Nicias, and before the mood could pass Demosthenes launched a furious attack against the new defensive wall which the Syracusans had constructed along the crest of the hill between Tycha and Euryalus. Demosthenes was confident that if he could once secure a footing upon the high ground of Epipolae he could make short work of this hastily constructed wall. The most promising method of attack appeared to be an ascent from the direction of Euryalus. Ordering provisions for five days, therefore, and taking with them all the masons and carpenters of the army, Demosthenes and Eurymedon set out for a night attack. Nicias, that most unfortunate of men, remained in the Athenian camp. He might no longer believe but he still could hope.

For a time all went well. The defence was surprised and driven back, rallied and was driven back again. Fortune appeared to hang in the balance. The Syracusans scarcely knew what to make of it. An enterprise of this sort was entirely different from the cautious policy to which Nicias had accustomed them. Gylippus with his own troops hurried from the outworks. All was darkness, confusion and uncertainty. But the gods themselves fought against

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the Athenians in Sicily. At the very moment when victory appeared within their grasp the entire attack dissolved in panic. Within an incredibly short space of time the whole army was in flight. Such was the rush for safety that of those who were pursued the greater number perished by throwing themselves from the cliffs, the descent from Epipolae being by a narrow path. It was enough. Demosthenes had learned all he required to know. He proposed to embark the army and to return home forthwith. There was no longer anything to hope for.

There can be little doubt that misfortune and illness had almost destroyed in Nicias the power to act with resolution. He had never had faith in the Sicilian expedition, he had himself requested leave to abandon it, but now that he was faced with the need to act upon his judgment he was consumed by doubts and fears. There followed a period of futile inaction. On the Syracusan side Gylippus was of a very different texture, and it was his return to the city after a successful journey in search of reinforcements that ultimately decided the Athenian Commander-in-Chief to assume responsibility for retreat. To some extent no doubt the fatal hesitation of Nicias was due to the confidential reports which reached him from Syracuse itself. Nicias was a politician by temperament and a soldier by accident, and he never quite lost hope of averting disaster by finesse. But his friends within the city, such as they were, were of small use to him. At last, however, he had brought himself to a decision, and Demosthenes and Eurymedon, a prey to frantic anxieties, were informed that the army would sail forthwith. It was at this moment that there occurred an eclipse of the moon. Nicias, astounded at this omen, consulted the astrologers, and upon their advice decided to postpone his departure till the next new moon. Mankind would be vastly the richer for a verbatim report of the conversation which doubtless took place between Demosthenes and Eurymedon when this decision became known.

The defenders were now in great spirits. The mere intention to retreat stamped defeat upon the invaders, and a naval battle in which Eurymedon was killed and the

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Athenian fleet considerably damaged, suggested to the Syracusans the amazing plan of sealing the exit from the harbour and capturing the enemy *in toto*. With this intention they closed the mouth of the Great Harbour by a line of ships, fastened the ships together with chains and connected each boat to the next with a bridge.

The ease with which the entire harbour of Syracuse may be overlooked will enable the visitor to appreciate the feelings of the Athenian host when the plan of their enemy had manifested itself. Since the decision to sail, the food supplies which had reached them overland had been stopped, so that the line of boats which now cut them off from the open sea virtually threatened them with starvation. But this consideration will not have occurred to them immediately. To the disillusioned, weary and homesick army the exit from the harbour had been the Gateway to Athens. The only point they had ever debated was when they should pass that door and leave behind them for ever this land of disaster and despair. And now the gate was closed. The thing was too abrupt, too cataclysmic to permit of any other thought. They were interned. Here for better or worse they were doomed to stay. Athens, Greece, home, friends—all had vanished with the appearance of that thin line that rose and fell with the movement of the sea.

The effect of a great catastrophe varies with the character of the individual. Upon Nicias the news reacted like the sting of a whip and from this moment he does all that man can do. The eclipse of the moon is forgotten, the astrologers are neglected and he flings himself with desperate energy into the task of reorganising the Athenian fleet for its last great effort.

The Athenian plan of battle in this, possibly the most spectacular sea fight the world has ever known, was simplicity itself. Put simply, every available man, every ship that would float, was to be hurled against the barricade. If they could break a way through, well and good. If not, then those who survived would march overland to wherever fortune should provide a home. Thucydides tells us that

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the number of ships which they manned was a hundred and ten. The decks of these vessels were crowded with soldiers ; within the Athenian camp there remained only a garrison and the sick. For the battle was to bear all the features of a land battle on ship-board. They were to hack their way through ; there was no room for seamanship. After a stirring appeal by Nicias, the fleet thrust off.

The moment of battle found the Syracusans well prepared. That the Athenians would attack the barricade, and attack with the courage of despair, had been clear to them before the barricade itself had been completed, and as soon as the Athenian oars struck the water the Syracusan vessels hurried to their appointed posts, some to the defence of the barricade, others to points along the shore from which they could hurl themselves upon the attackers. Except before the Athenian camp where the Athenians crowded every vantage point, the beach upon both sides was lined with Syracusan soldiers prepared to assist any Syracusan ship that put in for shelter. Never was any naval battle fought before so great an audience, or before spectators who were so vitally interested in the result. There was no question here of receiving after the event the news of victory or defeat. Every phase of the contest, each clever manœuvre, was seen as it took place. Hope and despair ran up and down the beaches. But Thucydides has given us a description of the scene which will be read as long as the Greek language is studied. 'The last chance of the Athenians lay in their ships, and their anxiety was dreadful. The fortune of the battle varied ; and it was not possible that the spectators on the shore should all receive the same impression of it. Being quite close and having different points of view, they would some of them see their own ships victorious, their courage would then revive, and they would earnestly call upon the gods not to take away from them their hope of deliverance. But others, who saw their ships worsted, cried and shrieked aloud, and were by the sight alone more utterly unnerved than the defeated combatants themselves. Others, again, who had fixed their gaze on some part of the struggle which was undecided, were in a

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state of excitement still more terrible ; they kept swaying their bodies to and fro in an agony of hope and fear as the stubborn conflict went on and on ; for at every instant they were all but saved or all but lost. And while the strife hung in the balance you might hear in the Athenian army at once lamentation, shouting, cries of victory or defeat, and all the various sounds which are wrung from a great host in extremity of danger.’¹

Gazing across the Great Harbour from the vantage point of the Greek Theatre, I appreciated as I had never been able to do before, the series of combats which must have occurred before the anxious gaze of the onlookers. About the barricade a confused mob of vessels wheeled and collided amidst a din indescribable. But everywhere in the harbour isolated ships manœuvring for a new rush at the obstruction were being subjected to furious attacks from Syracusan vessels, which had put out from the beaches for the purpose. Often two or even more vessels were unavoidably entangled about one, and the pilots had to make plans of attack and defence, not against one adversary only, but against several coming from different sides.

Thus matters continued until, probably with surprising suddenness, the Athenian effort snapped. Amidst a rush of foam, the surviving ships came back across the harbour and as they struck the shore the crews, hurling themselves overboard, rushed up the beach to the shelter of the camp. All was over. Demosthenes, it is true, proposed another attempt and Nicias agreed to the proposal. But the fight had gone out of the Athenians and the sailors refused to embark. As we have said, all was over. And now, before the inevitable end, there follows one last blunder. The prospects of this disorganised and hopeless army were in any event appalling, but the one step that might have secured for it at least a temporary respite, was by the ingenuity of the Syracusans effectively delayed. Had the Athenians marched out immediately they could perhaps have made their way to some remote part of the island where they might have restored their morale and recon-

¹ *Thucydides VII, 71.* Jowett’s translation.

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stituted themselves an efficient and effective force. And the Syracusans, it appears, were at the moment in no mood to stop them. Most of them in the exultation of victory were drinking and keeping holiday. To gain time, therefore, the Syracusans exploited the trust which Nicias still reposed in the pro-Athenian residents of the city. They sent him a message advising him not to withdraw during the hours of darkness but to wait for the daylight. Nicias did better, he added another twenty-four hours to the golden moment of the Syracusans, and when at last the army set out, on the third day after the great battle, Gylippus and his Syracusans were securely entrenched upon the road. The rest was a mere slaughter.

Thucydides describing the sailing of the expedition from Athens remarks that the spirit of the citizens 'revived at the sight of the armament in all its strength and of the abundant provision which they had made. The strangers and the rest of the multitude came out of curiosity, desiring to witness an enterprise of which the greatness exceeded belief. No armament so magnificent or costly had ever been sent out by any single Hellenic power. . . . On the fleet the greatest pains and expense had been lavished . . . the infantry had been well selected. . . . There was the keenest rivalry among the soldiers in the matter of arms and personal equipment.'¹

The same writer thus describes the same army as it marched from Syracuse leaving its dead unburied and abandoning its sick and wounded: ' . . . the whole army was in tears, and such was their despair that they could hardly make up their minds to stir . . . there was also a general feeling of shame and self-reproach—indeed they seemed, not like an army, but like the fugitive population of a City captured after a siege.'

There were not less than forty thousand of them.

It was the intention of Nicias to reach the Sicel territory in the centre of the island. But this is really immaterial. The unfortunate host passed the modern town of Floridia only to find their way barred by a well defended wall. They

¹ *Thucydides VI*, 30, 31.

retreated southwards and headed for Gela, but at the ford of the river Kakyparis discovered more fortifications and more Syracusans. They effected a crossing and reached the river Erineos and there learned that the entire rearguard, and Demosthenes with it, had been cut up and captured. Demosthenes had attempted to take his own life, but the enemy had intervened and for the moment held him a prisoner.

On the following day this rabble of armed men resumed its march until they reached the stream of the Assinaros where the Syracusans slaughtered them until the waters ran red. Nicias himself surrendered, but Gylippus, who would gladly have saved his life, was powerless to control the situation, and, together with Demosthenes, the Athenian General was butchered by his captors. As for the captives, they melted away like water into sand. For the most part no one could say who carried them off or where they died. Some few escaped to Catane, others lived in hiding in different parts of the island, but the greater number spent the rest of their days the slaves of individual captors. As Freeman remarks, 'the greater part of the prisoners seem to have been embezzled, as one may say, in this sort.' About 7,000 state prisoners reached Syracuse, most of them from Demosthenes' army which had surrendered, these were cast into the quarries where by day they scorched in the sun and at night trembled with the cold. But disease, wounds and misery made short work of them. Those who survived were sold. One pleasing and curious tradition deserves to be mentioned before we close this account of these unfortunate individuals. It is said that in more than one instance an Athenian slave secured his liberty by displaying his knowledge of the plays and speeches of Euripides, such was the veneration with which the Syracusans still regarded the poets and playwrights of Hellas. But save for a few such individuals, the great army and fleet with which Athens had essayed the capture of Syracuse had utterly vanished from the face of the earth. As Thucydides remarks, 'Nothing was saved, and of the many who went forth few returned home.'

CHAPTER III

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DIONYSIUS I—DIONYSIUS II—TIMOLEON—AGATHOCLES—THE
PUNIC WARS—SIEGE OF SYRACUSE BY THE ROMANS—
ARCHIMEDES

DIONYSIUS I. There is one name which will continually be brought to the notice of tourists in Syracuse, that of Dionysius I. It may indeed be said without exaggeration that the part played by this character in the history of the city was so extraordinary that much of Syracuse as we see it to-day will be unintelligible to the traveller who does not know something about him. It will be necessary, however, before we deal with one who has been described as 'the most powerful prince of his time next to the King of Persia', to touch very briefly upon the years that immediately followed the Athenian *debâcle*.

It will be remembered that Nicias to the bitter end counted upon assistance from the democrats within Syracuse. In so doing he calculated falsely since during the siege they accomplished little or nothing. As soon as the victory had been won, however, the democrats asserted themselves, and one of their first acts was to banish Hermocrates to whom, jointly with Gylippus, Syracuse owed her safety. For Hermocrates had small use for a democratic Government. He was in fact too efficient for a city that wanted a holiday. It happened, however, unfortunately for the citizens, that the period of democratic government that followed was rudely disturbed by the Carthaginian invasion under Hannibal who pillaged Selinus and utterly destroyed Himera (409 B.C.). The affair at Himera was particularly ghastly, for here Hannibal was concerned less to achieve a victory than to wipe out a defeat. The death of Hamilcar had to be atoned for. The Syracusan efforts to lend assistance were of a very negative kind and the position of the democrats was somewhat shaken in consequence. At this juncture

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Hermocrates returned to Sicily and from his headquarters amidst the ruins of Selinus commenced a guerilla warfare against the invaders. Syracuse, however, declined to annul the sentence of banishment and when Hermocrates entered the city on hearing that Diocles, the democratic leader, had taken to flight, he was overpowered and slain. Amongst the handful of men who accompanied Hermocrates into Syracuse was one who was left for dead on the ground. He was afterwards Dionysius I. If this fact was ever appreciated in his lifetime there must have been more than one Syracusan who wished he had taken things a little less for granted on that fateful night. For Dionysius was considerably less of a democrat than Hermocrates. Hermocrates would not entrust power to the mob because he desired it for his country; Dionysius denied power to the mob because he desired it for himself.

Dionysius found his first real opportunity in the overthrow of Acragas. After destroying Himera, Hannibal had returned to Carthage; but the lion was once again out of the bush and this time all Sicily was threatened. Dionysius made the most of his chance, and borrowing a hint or two from the democrats, he led the attack upon the Syracusan generals who had failed to save the Acragantines. It does not do to accept everything that Diodorus tells us, but he has an effective knack of suggesting a character which in the case of Dionysius carries conviction with it: 'Dionysius being thus encouraged stirred up the people, and filled the Assembly with tumult by his criminations, charging the commanders that, for bribes, they had drawn off and forsaken the Acragantines . . . while he was executing these projects, the most prudent citizens suspected him, and every Assembly gave very hard and ill words. On the other hand the common people, ignorant of his deceit and fraud, praised everything he did and published everywhere that now at length they had got a faithful and constant guardian and defender of the city.'

All this succeeded famously, and Dionysius, a man of no birth and small means, soon found himself possessed of absolute power and confronted only by the problem how

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to preserve it. But in this matter he was ingenuity itself. Setting his friends to make an uproar in the camp, he fled to the city and went to sleep. In the morning it was announced that an outrageous attack had been made upon his person, and to the general satisfaction he was given a bodyguard of 600 picked men, which he subsequently increased to 1,000. One thousand picked men constitute a good argument when a ruler's actions are called in question. Extra pay for the soldiers, a few polite remarks to the citizens and the thing was done. The secret of the comparative ease with which Dionysius had possessed himself of power was to be found in the terror with which the exploits of the Carthaginians filled all Sicily. He was, at it were, a form of insurance. He was not accepted for what he was, but for what he might prevent. 'The Carthaginians? Why, they're my best friends.' We do not know that Dionysius ever said this, but it is strange if he did not.

The first political actions of the new ruler bear a curious complexion. The Carthaginians at this time were thundering at the gates of Gela,¹ not much more than fifty-five miles almost due west of Syracuse. Selinus² had gone, Acragas³ had followed, two cities only, Gela and Camarina, now intervened between the invaders and Syracuse. In such circumstances, we think, Hermocrates would have conquered or died. But Dionysius was above such weakness. It has never been proved that he made a deal with the Carthaginians, but it is more than probable that this was the case. At any rate the combined attack upon the troops investing Gela entirely miscarries through the failure of Dionysius to carry out his part of the operations, the inhabitants of both Gela and Camarina are persuaded to leave their homes and seek safety in Syracuse, both cities are occupied by the enemy practically without any further struggle and Dionysius is secured in his rule by a treaty which for the time being confirms Carthage in the possession of all that she holds but keeps her at arm's length from Syracuse. Victories of this sort are not always attained without inconvenience, and Dionysius found himself called

¹ Modern Terranova.

² Selinunte.

³ Girgenti.

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upon to deal with a short-lived revolution in which his house had been raided and his wife molested. However, the revolutionaries were a comparative small number of the better-class citizens and these it was possible to kill.

Secured for the moment from interference from without, Dionysius now set himself to consolidate his position within the city itself. One of his first acts was to control the connection between the island and the mainland by a turreted wall. Entrance to Ortygia was now gained through no fewer than five successive gates. Upon the connecting isthmus itself and at the further extremity of Ortygia he erected castles. Thus the island formed, as it were, a well-defended citadel within the city. Finally he suffered no one to live in Ortygia who was not known to be his friend. In these works he was doubtless primarily concerned with his own safety. To ensure the strength of the city he embarked upon other and necessarily more comprehensive efforts.

One of his more interesting works was concerned with the Lesser Harbour, which became in his hands a naval dockyard of great strength. It is suggested that the original mole was considerably to the east of the one now existing, and that the exit from this harbour originally led to the Great Harbour. It is clear, if this was the case, that Dionysius built a new mole cutting off the Lesser from the Greater Harbour, and by the destruction of the original mole afforded a direct exit to the sea. The new entrance was guarded by a mole, possibly constructed upon the debris of the original connection with the island, in which there was a narrow passage through which not more than one vessel might pass at a time.

The outstanding works of Dionysius, however, were the prodigious walls which he constructed from the southern and northern extremities of the city westward to Euryalus. The plan of Nicias, never completely realised, comprised an investing wall across Epipolae. Dionysius effectively prevented any attempt of this sort in the future. Syracuse now presented something of the shape of a spear head, of which the base rested upon the sea and Euryalus formed the point. But the extension, unlike the enclosure of Achradina

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effected by Gelon, was solely for the purposes of defence. The growth of population did not, indeed could not, keep pace with it. Syracuse was now the greatest fortified city in Europe.

The construction of the new walls was undoubtedly an extraordinary feat. They must have reached together something like eight miles in length, and yet, thanks to the resources and the genius of the tyrant, they were completed in record time. Sixty thousand freemen, it is said, were engaged upon this work. Their labours were directed by engineers and master-builderseach of whom had his own length of wall. Within the great quarries of Syracuse, thousands of slaves cut and moulded the stone blocks which six thousand yoke of oxen were employed to transport to the hill. 'The multitude of the workmen produced great admiration in the spectators. . . . Dionysius to encourage them, here promised great rewards to the architects, there to the carpenters, and here again to the labourers, and he himself with his friends would often oversee the work whole days together. . . . By which means everyone strove who should do most in so much as besides their daily labours, they wrought some part of the night.'¹

The northern wall from Tycha to Euryalus, a distance of more than three miles, is said to have been completed within twenty days. The great fort at the apex of the triangle, however, must have taken some time to complete, but unfortunately our knowledge of the circumstances in which Dionysius erected this structure at Euryalus is very incomplete.

Dionysius shared with all the great leaders of history the ability to think upon a vast scale in a compact and methodical fashion. His mind abhorred a muddle and he worked from the centre outwards. We see him prepare a retreat upon Ortygia. Having thus guaranteed his own safety in the event of rebellion, he proceeds to make the city invulnerable. He creates a new class of citizens from enfranchised slaves as a guarantee against danger from within, and he erects marvellous defences to withstand danger from without.

¹ Diodorus.

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Finally, having passed from his personal safety to that of the city, he proceeds from the safety of the city to the increase of its power, and constructs a great navy and entirely remodels the army.

Dionysius was one of the first great captains to appreciate the importance of combination in military effort. The Spartan relied upon the courage and character of the individual soldier, the Athenian upon the magnificence of his arms, the Carthaginian upon the size of his host. It was left to Dionysius to co-ordinate the different branches of military force into one organic whole, or, in other words, to conduct warfare upon scientific lines. As regards the engines of war, from catapults to ships, nothing that had previously existed was good enough for him. Diodorus gives us a bird's-eye view of his efforts: 'He forthwith gets together all sorts of artificers, some out of the towns and cities of his own dominion and others hired with more than ordinary wages out of Italy and Greece. . . . He himself directed the force and fashion of every sort of weapon . . . not only the porches and back parts of the temples but the schools and walks, and galleries about the forum and every place up and down were full of workmen . . . the art of making engines to hurl great stones was now first known in Syracuse, for at this time the most excellent artificers were met together from all parts; for the great wages and large promises of rewards to the perfecting of the work, made the tradesmen and artificers very intent and industrious. And besides all this Dionysius himself came every day to oversee the workmen.'

His catapults hurled stones of two or three hundred-weight a distance of two or three hundred yards, his ships were greater and more formidable than any that had previously been known.

The ingenuity and extraordinary cleverness of Dionysius stamp him as a man of an entirely unusual calibre, and yet somehow he fails to engage our sympathy. Whenever his rule is called in question we hope to find him in flight, and as we follow his career we demand with increasing urgency the news of his death. Why is this? The explanation, we believe, lies in the extent to which his ability is blended with



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trickery. We never feel that he is wholly honest in any purpose or with any individual. From first to last we never see the character of the man, we are conscious only of his policy. He captures Naxos and Catane and sells the inhabitants in the slave market. But when he fights the Italiots on the mainland, and when the enemy have surrendered to the number of several thousands, he permits them to go free and does not even ask for a ransom. He accepts a bribe from Himilco to permit him to escape, but we know that he was not interested either in the person of the Carthaginian General, or even to any great extent in his money. He is concerned merely to keep alive the fear that conduces to his own safety. Finally, he is credited with a strictly moral behaviour, allowance being made for the customs of the times ; but here again he is not governed by principle but by policy, he will not give the citizens an unnecessary cause for complaint. On the other hand money is really necessary to him and he does not scruple to rob a temple whenever a temple may be robbed conveniently. In short, he seems to stand for nothing definite. It is inevitable that after a time we should become disgusted with the trickery and deceit which seems inseparable from every effort that he makes. It poisons his private life, governs every act of his policy, and is not absent even from his military achievements. As Bury points out : ' It is to be remembered that he won nearly all his successes by sieges and surprises, by diplomacy and craft, and that the name of this great military innovator is not associated with a single famous battle in the open field.'

And finally, his policies and his victories lead nowhere and serve no great or intelligible purpose. From first to last Dionysius appears concerned with the mere amassing of territory. Like the miser that he is, he accumulates without a conscience and without an object.

Judged merely by its size, the empire of Dionysius at its greatest was not particularly extensive. It comprised all Sicily excepting the north-west corner, which the Carthaginians managed to retain, the toe and heel of Italy, the Adriatic coast of Italy as far as the north of the Gargano

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Promontory, and the country we now know as Albania. But when we recollect that Dionysius built up this Empire with the resources of a solitary Sicilian city and that he was not even entitled to that, we are bound to admit that his achievement was no ordinary one.

Unhappily for the Syracusans the expenditure of money necessitated by warfare upon the scale upon which Dionysius conducted it, was colossal. The coinage was debased, silver being in some places replaced by tin, temples were rifled, and the citizens, so it is said, paid a fifth of their capital every year into the state coffers.

The siege of Gela, at which the conduct of Dionysius was calculated to rouse suspicion, had taken place in 405 B.C. and his first great campaign against the Carthaginians was in 398. There intervened, therefore, a period of at most seven or eight years in which the tyrant was able to prepare for the struggle. But the campaign itself, although crowded with events, was far shorter. Dionysius marched along the south coast of the island to Motya, the island stronghold of the invaders in the west. Motya fell after a fierce resistance, the foreign prisoners were sold as slaves and the Greek mercenaries were crucified. The following spring found Dionysius before Segesta. But Carthage was now roused and Himilco once again takes the field, recaptures Motya and raises the siege of Segesta. Marching thence to Syracuse, Himilco fell upon Messana ¹ *en route*, and utterly demolished that city. When he left the site nothing recognisable remained upon it. Then followed the second great siege of Syracuse, less known perhaps than that by the Athenians, but in many respects quite comparable to it. The Carthaginian camp was placed along the Banks of the Anapus and Himilco himself took up his residence within the Temple of Olympian Zeus. However, history repeated itself. To the valour of the Syracusans was added the pestilential atmosphere of the swamp in which the invaders were camped, and plague and fever soon commenced to riddle the Carthaginians as surely as they had the Athenians. It is extraordinary and significant that whilst the enemy was

¹ Messina.

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besieging the city the citizens endeavoured to overthrow Dionysius. However, the effort came to nothing. There followed a well-timed attack both by sea and land in which victory everywhere rested with the Syracusans, the Carthaginians in short were 'caught napping', their army was cut to ribbons and their fleet destroyed. And now Dionysius displayed a characteristic love of intrigue. With everything in his own hands and the destruction of Messana fresh in his memory, he intrigued behind the backs of his own allies to permit Himilco to escape. Himilco with a few ships abandoned his army and fled to Carthage where he passed the remaining years of his life unhonoured, a suppliant at the temples. For to his impious conduct in camping in a temple, the Carthaginians affected to ascribe the subsequent destruction of his army. It was five years before the invaders returned under Mago, five years well occupied by Dionysius in the extension of his kingdom. But victory again rests with Syracuse, which now secures by treaty lordship over all the Greek communities in Sicily. The activity of Dionysius during these and the succeeding years must have been incessant. The rebuilding and repeopling of Messana was a mere incident in a period which found him engaged in a victorious campaign on the mainland of Italy. However, he had now reached the zenith of his power. In 383 B.C. the third Carthaginian War breaks out; Dionysius suffers defeat and loss, which in the fourth Carthaginian War of 368 B.C. he endeavours in vain to make good. At length in 367 B.C. this curious career comes to an end and Dionysius dies after thirty-eight years of absolute power. The circumstances are curious: 'Dionysius the tyrant of Syracuse . . . employed himself in writing verses and sent for poets far and near, whom he held in high esteem, and made his familiars, to whose judgment he appealed. Being flattered by these in their own interests he grew highly conceited and was prouder of his poems than of his conquests.'¹

In short, Dionysius, as a poet, took himself very seriously. After competing in many competitions with little success, he at length received the scarcely expected news that one of

¹ Diodorus.

his efforts had secured a prize. Carried away by his delight he forthwith celebrated the occasion to such an extent that he died of the effects: 'His career had been indeed a wonderful one. He had destroyed the freedom of his native city, but he had made it both the greatest city and the greatest power in Europe. No man had won greater successes over the barbarian enemies of Greece; but no man had done more to destroy Greek cities, and to plant barbarians in his own island.'¹

Dionysius II. The History of Syracuse after the death of Dionysius I may be dealt with very briefly since those monuments which still remain to us were, for the greater part, existing prior to that date.

Dionysius II, who succeeded his father, was entirely unequipped for the difficulties which he was called upon to meet. The recent tyranny had not eliminated discontent although it had kept it under control, and when the powerful tyrant was no more signs of unrest became everywhere apparent.

What followed would be amusing were it not so tragic. The principal adviser of Dionysius I, in his later days, was a certain Dion, a disciple of Plato. Dion was unquestionably an able man, and he must have been, at least to some extent, a practical man of affairs. However, the advent to power of a selfish and sensuous weakling seemed to him an admirable opportunity to found in Syracuse an ideal state upon Platonic lines. He accordingly persuaded Dionysius II to receive Plato, and to place himself under his guidance. In due course Plato arrived, and was received with every sign of respect and the period of tuition commenced. Now, if there is one thing more than any other which history makes abundantly clear it is that the decisive factor in all human affairs is human nature, and it is precisely this factor which every philosopher, down to the Socialists of our own day, invariably ignores. Plato himself, we think, must have appreciated the prodigious difference between enunciating precepts upon paper and incorporating them as an integral part of the character of living men. However, he set to

¹ Freeman.

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work at the beginning and as a first step towards the attainment of an ideal ruler for his ideal State he commenced to teach Dionysius geometry.

The thing could not last of course. The pupil broke away. Dion was banished. Plato returned to Athens.

Feeling between Dionysius and Dion became very strained. Dion took up his residence in Athens and Dionysius seizing his wife married her to some one else, a step calculated to cause annoyance even to a philosopher. Events now took their inevitable course.

Dion returned to Syracuse when Dionysius was in Italy, and, seizing the city, laid siege to the island which alone remained loyal to the tyrant. When, a week later, Dionysius returned the situation was a curious one. The nominal ruler of the state was confined to Ortygia and the city was controlled by Dion, for whom nobody had much affection. Affairs now rapidly degenerated into chaos. Dionysius fled. Dion was deposed from the leadership of the rebels. The Syracusans continued to besiege the island. Dion regained his power amongst the besiegers, captured the island, incidentally, like a true philosopher, remarried his wife, and then commenced a tyranny of his own.

Finally, in 354 B.C., Dion is murdered by his fellow pupil in philosophy, Callippus. Dionysius returns to the island and Syracuse, not knowing whether it is on its head or its heels, appeals to Corinth, the Greek mother of the Colony, to extricate it from the appalling confusion wrought by tyrants who behave like murderers, philosophers who talk like tyrants and soldiers who fight like philosophers. Corinth in answer to the appeal sent Timoleon.

Timoleon. Timoleon in the words of Diodorus was the most valiant and expert commander amongst the Corinthians, and a person in every way virtuous. But Corinth, we think, in lending him to the Syracusans was really concerned to remove an embarrassment of its own. For Timoleon, having saved his brother's life in battle, later put him to death on the ground that he plotted to make himself a tyrant. Democratic virtue of this kind aroused mixed feelings, and the Corinthians ingeniously allayed popular

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sentiment by the statement that Timoleon should be regarded as one who had slain a tyrant if he were successful, but as one who had killed his brother if he failed. Timoleon sailed in 344 B.C. and managed affairs so well that within a short time Dionysius asked permission to retire to Corinth. Permission was given and Dionysius II takes his proper place as a harmless, and probably not unhappy, nonentity in the gayest of the Greek cities. Timoleon, however, regarded the State of Syracuse as but a small portion of his responsibilities. Tyrants were to be found in all parts of Greek Sicily, and the Carthaginians remained a constant menace. However, fortune everywhere smiled on the Corinthian leader who, after defeating Hamilcar and Hasdrubal and the flower of the Carthaginian army on the banks of the Crimisu, gradually rid the country of the tyrannies that had sprung up under the influence and example of Dionysius I.

‘Among the great men in Greek History,’ Bury remarks, ‘he holds a unique place . . . he laboured in a strange land for cities which might adopt him but were not his own . . . of Greek leaders who achieved as much as he, there is none whose conduct was, like Timoleon’s, wholly guided by simple devotion to duty.’

The following lines from Freeman tell the close of the story with a dignity peculiarly fitting the subject: ‘Timoleon’s work was now done. . . . He became a private man, and, as a private man, he chose rather to live in the land which he had delivered than to go back to his own Corinth. He sent to Corinth for his wife and children, and spent the rest of his days on an estate close to Syracuse which the Syracusan people had given him. He became blind, and he seldom visited the city or took any part in public affairs. But when the Syracusan people wished for his advice, he was brought in a carriage into the theatre, and he told them what was best.’

Agathocles. For twenty years following the death of Timoleon in 336 B.C., Syracuse enjoyed a brief period of tranquillity. The years that followed, however, constitute a record of incessant intrigue and warfare. Agathocles usurps the sovereignty and once again tyranny succeeds democracy.

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Freeman, comparing Agathocles with Dionysius I, remarks that 'Agathocles was not a Syracusan by birth, and though he did greater things against the Carthaginians than any other Greek, he was never so distinctly as Dionysius the champion of united Greek Sicily.'

As a matter of fact we can probably say of both champions that they played exclusively for their own hand and exploited the situations in which they found themselves. Neither, we believe, was greatly hampered in his actions by any racial bias. If one was more Greek than the other it was because it was more convenient for him to be so. But however that may be, Agathocles made Syracuse, although it was for the last time in history, the centre of a great dominion.

In Agathocles the gambler was highly developed. His military genius was considerable but it is the hazardous that tempts him. Faced with the might of Carthage he alone of the Syracusan generals dares to carry the war into the enemy's camp. Thus when Hamilcar is actually before the walls of Syracuse the tyrant is in full possession of the open country round Carthage.

Hamilcar, aided by a great body of Greek troops recruited in Sicily, made a desperate but ill-fated attack upon Epipolae, and, in the rout of his troops, was captured. His end was abominable. Once again the Greeks exhibit their national characteristics. We find Greeks defending Syracuse and Greeks attacking it, and when fortune places in the hands of the defence a great opponent against whom they have no legitimate complaint beyond the fact that he has opposed them, they add every manner of insult to every form of injury and he dies in torment. It is extremely difficult to find in history any evidence of those great qualities which modern historians have bestowed upon the Greeks.

The conquests of Agathocles in Africa were not lasting, and although at home his power was such that he was almost a King of Sicily, there is little in the history of his reign that permanently affects the destinies of his territory. When at length he dies we are not sorry to get rid of him. A more treacherous and cruel despot has rarely made his appearance

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in the history of any country. Probably the little-known Dictator, Lopez of Paraguay, is his only modern counterpart. Both have ability of no mean order and both are driven by a diseased imagination to actions scarcely human.

Sicily and the Punic Wars. The reader who has followed the history of Syracuse as we have sketched it will have been conscious of the steadily increasing scale upon which men were scheming and fighting. The Athenian attack upon Syracuse is at best a light-hearted, although in the event utterly disastrous, effort to pick up loot. The Carthaginians who follow have definite plans which embrace Carthaginian ascendancy over a certain area of the island. Dionysius I has progressed so far that Syracuse becomes merely the centre of an Empire which extends to the Italian mainland. By this time, in short, the city has ceased to count except as a factor towards the attainment of greater ends. But this process of enlargement inevitably continues until by 264 B.C., when the first Punic War breaks out, all Sicily is no more than a detail in the comprehensive plans by which one empire seeks to subdue another. There thus comes a point at which the historian can no longer centre his history upon one city in particular. The canvas has been so enlarged that the city may scarcely be discerned. This is very nearly the case with Syracuse at the time with which we are dealing.

For some years past the excellence of her government, the discipline of her troops and, not least, the character of her citizens, had marked Rome as a city pre-destined to great achievements. By 275 B.C. all Italy acknowledged her power, and already the destinies of Sicily, still to some extent in Carthaginian occupation, were discussed upon the banks of the Tiber. For Carthage constituted at this time the most immediate as well as the most formidable menace to the Republic. Carthage had few of the virtues of Rome. But she possessed great wealth, her ambitions, though erratic, were boundless, and her generals were defeated only at a prodigious cost of blood and effort. Like a respectable householder who perceives two burglars ensconced in the

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next-door garden, the Romans viewed the Carthaginians in Sicily with considerable misgiving.

This, then, was the position when a band of mercenaries who some years before had forcibly possessed themselves of Messana, appealed for assistance against Syracuse. To be on the safe side the mercenaries appealed to Rome and Carthage at the same time and both the Romans and the Carthaginians hastened to the scene, the Carthaginians arriving first. So far as the initial dispute with Syracuse was concerned the Carthaginians appear to have gone a long way towards settling it. The Roman commander, however, contrived to seize the Carthaginian admiral and to compel the Carthaginian forces to withdraw. The reply of Carthage was a declaration of war in which Syracuse under Hiero II associated itself. Thus commenced the first Punic War which continued with varying success until 241 B.C., by which time the newly formed Roman fleet had proved itself a decisive factor in the dispute. Syracuse had made its peace with the Romans in little more than twelve months from the outbreak of hostilities, and for the remainder of his life Hiero continued the steadfast friend of the Republic. But to the bitter end the Carthaginians under Hamilcar Barca had maintained their grip upon the west of the island. However, the treaty which ended the war ceded all Sicily and the Lipari Islands to Rome.

All this was, of course, entirely satisfactory from the Roman point of view. But Rome was by no means inclined to permit matters to rest in this state. Carthage was no longer at her back door and the Roman fleet controlled the seas, but nothing less than the virtual extermination of her great rival would satisfy the requirements of Roman policy. Thus the days of peace which followed the conclusion of the First Punic War are days of continuous aggression. Carthage is to be baited and bullied until she concedes the excuse for the *coup de grâce*. However, Carthage was still living.

The appearance of Carthaginian troops in Spain must be attributed very largely to the loss of Sicily and the pressure exerted by Rome within Mediterranean waters. But we cannot, unfortunately, follow the fortune of this wonderful

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contest in any detail. It will be sufficient to notice that when the Second Punic War broke out in 218 B.C. Hamilcar Barca had already extended the Carthaginian Empire to Spain and had left in that country, under the control of Hannibal and Hasdrubal, a large and well-equipped army.

The Second Punic War, as everybody is aware, embodies the epic march by Hannibal and Hasdrubal through Spain and France and across the Alps into Italy. Cut off from their enemy by sea, the Carthaginians took the longer and more arduous route by land and came within an ace of effecting the ruin of their enemy. Hannibal reached Italy in 218 B.C. and amid every variety of fortune, good and bad, maintained himself in Italy until 203 B.C. It may safely be said that if Rome could have foreseen those years in the days that followed the First Punic War her policy would have been very different from what it was.

In those evil days the importance of Sicily to Rome as a source from which food could be obtained could scarcely be over-estimated, and we find without surprise that before the end is reached, the island has been drawn into the maelstrom. Hiero II remained until his death the steadfast friend of Rome, but on the succession of his grandson Hieronymus, Carthaginian influence became paramount in Syracuse and the Roman suzerainty was thrown off. Hieronymus, however, a somewhat vicious boy, was soon assassinated and the citizens declared for a republic. Syracuse was thrown into the greatest disorder and Rome gained nothing from the change.

In confusion and bloodshed the Syracusans took the government into their own hands, and Syracuse was soon definitely at war with Rome. But Syracuse was not alone in this revolt. The Roman hold over Sicily appeared everywhere endangered.

Syracuse Besieged by the Romans. These then were the circumstances that led to the siege of Syracuse by the Romans under Marcellus, a siege which assumes a tragic importance from the fact that Syracuse never again recovered her lost glories.

Marcellus and his troops invested Syracuse in 214 B.C.,

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and despite the fact that the Romans had at their command everything which in those times appeared to guarantee success, three years elapsed before the defences were overthrown and the city occupied. For this astonishing resistance credit must be given to a most extraordinary character, the philosopher and mathematician Archimedes.

Archimedes was born in Syracuse somewhere about 287 B.C.; he would therefore be at the time of the siege about seventy-three years old. The son of an astronomer, he had devoted himself to mathematical research. He had studied at Alexandria, was in correspondence with the greatest philosophers and scientists of his time, and held all mundane matters more or less in contempt. To this man, in their extremity, the Syracusans applied for assistance. It is improbable that Archimedes had any particular enthusiasm for the Syracusan cause. He was, we imagine, too much of a philosopher to care very greatly whether the city paid tribute to Carthage or to Rome. None the less, he must have secured a certain amount of enjoyment from the opportunities which he was afforded to put his knowledge to practical use, neither can he have been altogether indifferent to the amazement and concern which his achievements created amongst the Romans.

Marcellus made his first attack upon the city from the seaward side, assailing the coast-wall of Achradina with ships specially fitted for the purpose. But Archimedes now performed prodigies. He had long before astounded Hiero with his invention of the pulley. He now gave the discovery its first practical use in the purposes of warfare. For, lowering grapnels from cranes upon the walls he permitted the great hooks to swing to and fro until they fixed themselves in the prows of the Roman ships, when the cranes were set to work and the ships lifted by the bow from the water to the utter confusion of the troops on board. He enormously increased the throwing power of the old-fashioned catapult and hurled stones weighing 1,800 lbs. by indirect fire a distance of one thousand yards. Again, with an ingenious arrangement of reflectors he so focussed the sun's rays as to set ships afire even at a distance. All

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these things, at this date, were entirely novel to the Romans who were utterly aghast at feats which they had never contemplated in their wildest dreams. 'Wherefore,' in the words of Livy, 'a council being held, it was resolved, since every attempt was frustrated, to abstain from assaulting the place, and keeping up a blockade, only to cut off the provisions of the enemy by sea and land.'

To the Romans the continued resistance of Syracuse became a matter of the greatest consequence. All Sicily not already in Carthaginian hands commenced to rise. On all sides Roman garrisons were cut up, and citizens proclaimed their independence. Carthage and Rome alike watched the island with anxiety. Himilco landed 25,000 infantry, 3,000 cavalry and 12 elephants; Agrigentum was recaptured. It was common talk in Carthage and the states allied to her, that the Romans were about to be driven out of Sicily. The Romans who were besieging Syracuse were themselves besieged by Himilco and Hippocrates, who encamped on the River Anapus, and almost simultaneously a great Carthaginian fleet put into Syracuse harbour; anything seemed possible. 'So intent were both the contending powers upon Sicily,' Livy tells us, 'that the seat of war might seem to have been removed from Italy.'

But the tide was on the turn. Himilco could effect nothing against the Roman defences, the Carthaginian fleet put to sea to avoid the stronger forces of the Romans and reinforcements reached Marcellus. The Syracusans commenced to feel the strain. At length, shortly before the feast of Artemis when, as the Romans were well aware, the city would proceed to 'celebrate', a Roman by chance discovered a point in the outer defences where the wall was less high than elsewhere. Waiting therefore until the feast was in full swing and the garrison busy carousing, the Romans dispatched picked men to climb the wall and open a gate. The plan was successfully carried out, and almost without a struggle the invaders made themselves masters of Epipolæ. The fall of the city now became, short of a miracle, an affair of days. But the miracle was not forthcoming. The relieving army suffered the fate of every

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other army that had encamped upon the Anapus. It sickened and was riddled by plague. The Sicilian allies, seeing that all was lost, deserted to their homes. For the Carthaginians, however, there was no retreat. They perished, Livy tells us, together with their generals, Hippocrates and Himilco, to a man. Of the final scene little need be said. The Roman soldiers were more moderate than the Carthaginians in similar circumstances, but victory was victory and loot was loot. Amidst the burning and the cries, Archimedes, deep in some abstruse calculation, shaped figures in the sand; and whilst so occupied was killed by a passing Roman. He was indeed the scientist *par excellence*. To the very end he had attached no importance whatever to the mechanical prodigies which had astounded besiegers and besieged.

Livy, in a passage almost too well-known to bear repetition, tells us that when, shortly before the final overthrow of Syracuse, Marcellus ‘. . . beheld this city as it lay subjected to his view from the high ground on which he stood, a city the most beautiful, perhaps, of any at that time, he is said to have shed tears over it; partly from the inward satisfaction he felt at having accomplished so important an enterprise, and partly in consideration of its ancient renown’.

Curiously enough, however, when this passage is quoted it is usually with the intention to portray the emotion of Marcellus, a point of little interest. The real importance in the passage is the tribute it pays to the beauty of Syracuse. Cicero furnishes similar evidence. ‘That illustrious man, Marcus Marcellus . . . when by valour and skill he had taken Syracuse, that most beautiful city . . . he not only allowed it to remain without any diminution of its strength, but he left it so highly adorned, as to be at the same time a monument of his victory, of his clemency, and of his moderation.’

Cicero, we must recollect, was concerned to emphasise the greed of Verres and it would be a mistake to accept this statement at its face value. None the less there can be no reasonable doubt that Syracuse was a truly magnificent city

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before the siege and a place of beauty for many years thereafter. The fall of Syracuse marked for the Carthaginians the beginning of the end. A guerilla warfare followed but it was not of long duration. Agrigentum ¹ was recaptured and before Carthage acknowledged defeat upon the mainland, Sicily had come once again under Roman rule.

Sicily has now definitely ceased to figure in European history except in so far as it reflects upon a small scale the gradual development of events upon the mainland. In the earlier and greater days of Rome, the island was not harshly used. The Punic Wars had taught the Romans the value of a granary so close at hand, and for many years agriculture was definitely encouraged in Sicily. To such an extent was this the case, and so well did the island respond to Roman rule, that Cicero remarks in his impeachment of Verres: 'We have always so esteemed the island of Sicily for every purpose, as to think that whatever she could produce was not so much raised among the Sicilians as stored up in our own homes. When did she not deliver the corn which she was bound to deliver, by the proper day? When did she fail to promise us, of her own accord, whatever she thought we stood in need of?'

However, Rome went the way of all empires, of every nation, and decadence at home was reflected by maladministration abroad. Amongst the number of bad governors the name of Verres, 73-71 B.C. is conspicuous. To such a man nothing was sacred. While his underlings molested the people, Verres stole their most cherished possessions. Thanks largely to the eloquence of Cicero this man lives in history. But it is significant, although the point is often overlooked, that Roman indignation was vented upon this governor less because he appropriated statues and works of art of all kinds than because, having appropriated them, he had the selfishness to retain them in his own possession. As Cicero remarks, '. . . the things which you carried off from the holiest temples with wickedness, and like a robber we cannot see, except in your own houses, or in those of your friends'. Quite an amusing complaint.

¹ Acragas, modern Girgenti.

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However, the same orator in the same speech pays an eloquent tribute to the Sicilians themselves. ‘ . . . Such is their patience, their virtue and their frugality, that they appear to approach very nearly the old-fashioned manners of our own country. . . . There is amongst them nothing that reminds us of the Greeks ; no sloth, no luxury ; on the contrary there is the greatest diligence in all public and private affairs.’

When every allowance has been made for the genius of a great speaker concerned to win sympathy for his cause, it must be admitted that so eventful an epoch might close with a worse epitaph.

CHAPTER IV

THE FALL OF SELINUS (SELINUNTE)

BETWEEN the Athenian invasion of Syracuse with its termination so utterly disastrous to the invaders and the Carthaginian invasion which was to cause the destruction of Selinus, there was a short space of four years. Few facts bring home more acutely the utter uncertainty of life in those early days. Carthage had not yet attained the height of her power, but her wealth was considerable, and since the ill-fated expedition which Hamilcar had led against Himera in the north of the island, in 480 B.C. there can have been few Greeks in Sicily to whom the name of Carthage was not a portent of evil. It is true that Selinus in the days of Hamilcar had become a dependency of Carthage, but later she had thrown off the Phoenician yoke, and in 409 B.C., when the Carthaginian army made its appearance she had nothing to hope for on that score. It is curious that the military prowess of Selinus served as a pretext for both the Athenian and Carthaginian invasions. In each case her victories over Segesta had caused that city to search for help from overseas, but it can scarcely be doubted that the real cause of both invasions was more deep-seated. Athens, we think, embarked upon the Syracusan adventure because an adventure of some sort was necessary to the political purposes of certain of her democratic leaders; Carthage, because the wealth and power of the State sought an outlet. In each case the appeal of Segesta was little more than a convenient pretext. The attraction was not the need of Segesta but the wealth of Sicily.

But, however that may be, when news reached Selinus that the Carthaginians were preparing an army of invasion they must have known that their case was desperate in the extreme.

Unfortunately there remains at Selinunte little that will

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assist us to form a correct estimate of the size of Selinus. It is clear, however, from the extraordinary scale upon which her temples were planned that the ancient city was one of far more than ordinary importance. 'The city', says Freeman, 'had long spread from the akropolis over the northern hill and down into the two valleys; it was fast growing, at least in the form of sacred suburbs, over the eastern and western hills.'

But whilst we read of fierce fighting at the walls of the city we have no guide as to where these walls stood. It is indeed possible that the city was so unprepared for a war of defence that little more than the akropolis was enclosed.

The Carthaginian army lacked nothing that could conduce to its success. Its soldiers had been recruited by Carthaginian gold from all parts of the then known world, and comprised, it is said, considerably more than one hundred thousand foot and four thousand horse together with engines of war of every description. This great force which was entrusted to the leadership of Hannibal, nephew of the Hamilcar who had sacrificed himself at Himera and grandfather of the Hannibal who many years later was to wage tremendous war with Rome, landed at Lilybaeum on the west coast of the island, and marched immediately upon Selinus.

Accustomed as we are to wars in which a maximum of effort is happily combined with a minimum of result, it is almost impossible for us to appreciate the extraordinary reality which clothed such an incident as the siege of Selinus. We cannot conceive of a siege in which the issue at stake is something more than a form of words or the ownership of some distant shore.

But the atmosphere of unreality which to-day cloaks every great issue has been a gradual growth from sterner times. There was no citizen of Selinus who did not realise that on the day the defence failed his life was forfeit. 'The young men courageously slighted all hazards; the old men ran from place to place upon the walls, to furnish the others from time to time with all things necessary for the defence, beseeching them not to suffer the enemy to enter. The

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women and children brought meat and weapons to them who were fighting for their country.' ¹

However, Hannibal, who had promised the plunder of the town to his soldiers, placed his battering rams to the walls and commenced a furious assault. The defence must have been desperate in the extreme for the one hope of the Selinuntines lay in the arrival of the Syracusans and others who were marching to their aid. But the city was ill prepared for defence, and after nine days the Carthaginians had made a breach in the wall. Even then the fight still continued. Every step of the way was contested, the men slew and were slain in the streets while the women and children hurled tiles and stones at the invaders from the roofs of the houses. Thus the fight was maintained throughout the day, fresh troops continually entering through the breaches to replace those of the invaders who had fallen, until at length the Selinuntines were driven from the streets, and the enraged barbarians commenced 'to kill and destroy where and whom they pleased'.

Of the surviving Selinuntines the greater part formed themselves into a compact body in the market place and there fought it out to the last man. But the barbarians raged in all parts of the city, rifled the houses, slew the citizens and old women, and tortured the maidens and children. Some carried multitudes of hands tied round their bodies, others ostentatiously carried heads of the slain upon the points of their swords and spears. Late into the night the flames of the burning houses shed a baleful light upon scenes of horror and despair. Through an inferno of blood and corpses captive women to the number of five thousand or more were driven to the camp of the victors. For some time there might be heard only the roar of the flames, the wailing of the captives and the exulting shouts of the Carthaginians.

Yet in some manner almost inexplicable more than two thousand of the Selinuntines escaped. It is more easy to understand that sixteen thousand died and that five thousand went into captivity. However, if we may accept

¹ Diodorus.

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the authority of Diodorus, two thousand six hundred citizens somehow made their way to Acragas, that abode of wealth and beauty which all too soon was to go the way way of Selinus. There they were 'received with all manner of humanity and tenderness'. Thus fell Selinus two thousand three hundred and thirty odd years ago.

The history of Selinus from its destruction by Hannibal may be briefly told. The relieving army made its appearance in due course but, finding that the city had fallen, Syracuse fell back upon diplomacy. As the result of the ensuing negotiations Hannibal permitted the refugees to return from Acragas to their ruins, but their lot was not a happy one. Selinus had practically ceased to exist. The temples, however, had not been destroyed, neither had the substantial walls of the acropolis been altogether dismantled. For this we must look to the eagerness with which Hannibal contemplated his attack upon Himera in the north of the island. The wealth of Selinus was now distributed among his troops, a mere handful of the citizens survived, nothing that he could still do could add anything to the plunder nor make the city more impotent. Without loss of time he marched north.

A few months pass and we find Selinus once again a name in history when Hermocrates, the exiled patriot of Syracuse, makes it his headquarters in the guerilla warfare which he conducts against the Carthaginian invaders. But the episode is short lived and in 367 B.C. after changing hands more than once in the course of the great struggle between Dionysius and Carthage, the city is definitely classified as a Carthaginian possession. To all intents and purposes, however, the history of Selinus ends with its capture by Hannibal in 409 B.C.

CHAPTER V

THE FALL OF ACRAGAS (GIRGENTI)

AFTER the siege and overthrow of Selinus, Hannibal had marched northward to the city of Himera, there to exact a terrible vengeance for the victory that had cost Hamilcar his life. From Himera he appears to have returned to Carthage, but the following year, 406 B.C., he is once again in Sicily. At this time Agragas (now known to us as Girgenti, from the Roman title Agrigentum) was the wealthiest city of Sicily. Of the great temples of which the remains astonish us to-day, only one, the Temple of Zeus, was still unfinished, and in this case only the roof was required to complete it.

The city itself, far greater than the town of to-day, was enclosed by a massive wall which passed from the hill occupied by the present town to the hill lying to the east of it at the back of the Hotel des Temples, thence, sloping southwards, the wall reached the Temple of Hera (Juno) where it turned abruptly to the west passing below the Olympion to the great Fish Pond. At this point the wall turned north again along the bank of the Hypsas, or Drago, as it is now termed. Slightly to the north of the Temple of Hera stood the eastern gate from which led the road to Gela and Syracuse, whilst the southern or 'Golden Gate' was a little to the east of the Olympion.

Gregorovius in a few significant sentences greatly assists us to picture the city in these days: 'The long line of temples which stood there must have presented the most stupendous sight, especially to the traveller coming from Heraclea, that is from the sea, who, first traversing the orchard-like fields, saw before him high above the walls, the temples, the sacred guardians of the populous city, which with its streets and sumptuous buildings covered the hill, and ended on the highest eastern summit in the Temple of Minerva and on the west in the Acropolis.'

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Pindar describes Acragas as 'the most beautiful city of mortals'. Within the walls great temples and stately edifices combined to produce an unusual impression of grandeur and wealth; without might have been seen large and pleasant vineyards and groves of olive trees, indeed the olives which the Acragantines exported to Carthage accounted for a considerable part of their wealth.

It is difficult to realise the height of luxury attained by Acragas. When at the ninety-second Olympiad an Acragantine won the chariot race, no fewer than three hundred chariots, all drawn by white horses, attended his return. In the great Fish Pond were maintained all kinds of fish and water fowl for use at public banquets. The citizens wore garments of cloth of gold, their boxes for ointment were of gold and silver. Many of the wealthiest amongst them added rooms to their palaces merely to be able to provide free entertainments to which slaves at the gate invited the passers-by. A certain Antisthenes at the marriage of his daughter feasted all the citizens throughout every street; eight hundred chariots attended upon the bride. At this time the number of citizens amounted to about twenty thousand, but the total population of the city, including strangers, was scarcely less than two hundred thousand. But it is impossible to better the delightful remark of Plato that the inhabitants of Acragas built as if they never expected to die and feasted as if they had only an hour to live.

Acragas, in short, was not surpassed even by the Greek cities of the mainland. It was the prize of the island.

The citizens of this favoured spot were not a warlike race. Their prosperity had been built up in peace, and hitherto whilst Syracuse wrestled with the Athenians in the east or when Hannibal sacked Selinus to the west, they had managed to preserve a strict neutrality. They asked only to enjoy their riches in their own fashion. The second Carthaginian invasion, however, was to be made with the avowed intention of capturing all Sicily. It was not possible for the part to remain neutral whilst the whole was destroyed. There appeared, therefore, to be no way out of the difficulty. And to make things worse, of all the Sicilian cities, Acragas,

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now that Selinus was no more, stood the nearest to Carthage, which was much the same as to say that it would be the first to be attacked. It was in these disquieting circumstances that the men of Acragas prepared to do what they could to survive the gathering storm. We are told that in every misfortune there is somewhere hidden a redeeming feature—for Acragas, it can scarcely be doubted, this was to be found in the fact that the threat extended to every city of the island. There was no Greek city in Sicily, however remote or at other times antagonistic, whose interests were not now identical with her own.

Thus quite early in the day Acragas was able to assure herself of support from Syracuse, Gela and Camarina. By way of additional security the citizens hired a number of Campanian mercenaries and finally, that they might not fail on the score of leadership, they made successful approaches to a Spartan general, by name Dexippos, who happened to be staying at that time in Gela.

As a matter of fact the affluent and well-fed citizens of Acragas had no great confidence in themselves as opponents of the Carthaginian host, but the Syracusans were supposed to be stout fighters and nobody quite knew what a Spartan might or might not do. So they stored their grain within the city walls and assumed a brave appearance.

The Carthaginian host under the leadership of Hannibal and Himilco landed somewhere to the west of Acragas and marching to the city, formed two camps, the larger situated on the farther side of the Hypsas to the west of the Fish Pond and the smaller on the hills to the north-east of the city, i.e. overlooking the road to Gela. The main point of attack was to be that facing the larger camp. For some reason that is not clear Hannibal endeavoured to win over the city by an offer of immunity in return for her neutrality. But by this time the city was practically committed to a fight, and in any event if Carthage should conquer the rest of Sicily, Acragas was not likely to remain unaffected. It is quite possible to impoverish a city without actually destroying it. But whatever the deciding factor may have been, the citizens declined the offer.



TEMPLE OF HERCULES, GIRGENTI

FALL OF ACRAGAS (GIRGENTI)

And now occurred a circumstance which for the moment greatly encouraged the defenders. Although in many respects the most favourable point at which to attack, the wall to the east of the Carthaginian camp faced ground that was inclined to be swampy, and to overcome this disadvantage Hannibal rifled the tombs of the neighbouring necropolis for stone with which to pave the approach. Before the causeway had been completed however, a pestilence broke out among the invaders, and Hannibal died. However, Himilco, by sacrificing a boy, allayed the fears of the superstitious and the causeway was duly completed.

The point of attack may be recognised to-day near the junction of a small stream and the Hypsas. Here the valley widens and here was to be found the western gate of the city.

While the city was being assailed on the west the relieving army from Syracuse, Gela and Camarina, thirty thousand foot and five thousand horse, made a sudden appearance to the east and in the ensuing battle between this force and the Carthaginians who watched the eastern road, the invaders were put to flight, and their camp, the lesser Carthaginian camp, was captured.

It is not difficult for the visitor to Girgenti to picture the scene as it must have presented itself to an Acragantine onlooker in the temple of Juno. High up on the right lay the captured camp of which the Syracusans were now taking possession, and below, streaming towards their great camp farther west, were the routed Carthaginians. In the circumstances it was natural enough that the citizens should call on their generals to lead them against the disheartened and defeated force below them. But the generals, possibly remembering that Himilco still held his own army intact, refused to move, a decision which so infuriated the Acragantines that after a short discussion they slew four of them out of hand. Dexippos was not molested, probably because he was a Spartan, none the less he came under suspicion.

Things now looked almost promising for the defenders. The Syracusan fleet held command of the sea and the relieving army was greatly in evidence round about the city.

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The two forces, in short, were changing roles and it was now the Carthaginians who felt the pinch of hunger. In these circumstances Himilco showed to great advantage, for he recovered command over troops at one time openly mutinous. Further, he astounded the Syracusans by bringing his ships to the scene in spite of the fact that it was winter, when Carthaginian seamen were popularly supposed to stay at home. At any rate the Syracusan fleet was badly defeated, food was brought in for the land forces and the grip upon the city was tightened.

What followed will never be known in detail. It appears that the mercenaries transferred their services from Acragas to the invaders and that Dexippos advised the relieving force from Syracuse to carry the war to some other quarter of the island, and that the army did in fact withdraw. Whether Dexippos tendered his advice in return for a Carthaginian bribe, as was generally believed, or was really governed by the circumstances is uncertain. But whatever may have been the motive that inspired the advice, the Syracusan army marched away and abandoned Acragas to its enemy.

This development was by no means to the taste of the Acragantine citizens who after they had ascertained that only a small supply of food remained to them, decided without further ado to go away themselves. 'Upon this there was a lamentable outcry in every house throughout the whole city, of men, women and children, being in a distraction through fear and dread of the enemy on the one hand, and care of their goods and estates on the other. . . . Many that preferred death to the leaving of their country, killed themselves, choosing rather to die in their own houses. But that multitude of people that did go forth, were guarded by the soldiers of Gela, so that all the ways and country towards Gela swarmed with a promiscuous multitude of women and children; amongst whom were young ladies, who though they had now changed their former soft and delicate way of living, into the fatigues and sorrows of tedious journeys, yet being quickened and stirred up by fear bore all difficulties with eminent patience. They all came

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at length safe to Gela; and afterwards Leontium was given to them by the Syracusans to inhabit.' ¹

Amongst the few who remained in Acragas was Gellias, one of the most eminent of her citizens, and he, it is said, having taken refuge in the Temple of Athena when he saw the deeds of the Carthaginians, set fire to it destroying, not only himself but the vast treasures that the temple contained. However, the wealth of Acragas was in any event lost beyond redemption, for the invaders spared nothing. The temples were wrecked, the city plundered; the best of the spoil was sent to Carthage, the rest being put up to auction amongst the troops.

Although Acragas was never destined to recover her lost position in the Sicilian world the later history of the city was more fortunate than that of the neighbouring Selinus. Like Selinus she changed hands during the vicissitudes of the Carthaginian struggle, but unlike Selinus, she was colonised afresh in 339 B.C. by Timoleon, that strange character who at the bidding of his native city of Corinth devoted the remainder of his days to the interests of the Corinthian colonies in Sicily. For a time Acragas continued to prosper, first as an independent city and later as a Carthaginian possession, until in the first Punic War the city was sufficiently important to be besieged and captured by the Romans (262 B.C.) only, however, to be again retaken by the Carthaginians. The second Punic War saw the close of the Carthaginian era and Acragas finally passed into the possession of Rome (210 B.C.), and, as Agrigentum, enjoyed a period of peaceful unimportance.

¹ *Diodorus*, XIII, 12.

CHAPTER VI

SARACEN AND NORMAN TIMES

THE tourist who makes his way from Girgenti to Palermo must be prepared to leap from the days of the Carthaginians and the Romans to those of the Saracens and the Normans, from, let us say, the third century B.C. to the ninth century A.D. But the development which he will encounter, entirely unexpected as it may be, will scarcely surprise him. For the history of Sicily before the Christian era is in no sense a history of steady progress; it does not march towards any goal that we can anticipate.

We leave the ruined temples of Acragas, the broken walls of Syracuse, conscious that these cities have long since lost their power and their wealth, but without any clue to the nature of those forces which since their day have moulded and remoulded the destinies of the island. There is, it is true, a trace of the Saracen in the features of the present-day Agrigentine, just as there is a trace of the Norman in the Cathedral at Syracuse. But these things are questions, not explanations. They arouse our curiosity but tell us nothing. The volume of Acragas and Syracuse closes with the overthrow of those cities. We see everything diminishing and nothing growing up.

It is not unnatural that in such circumstances we should approach Palermo with considerable curiosity. Like the reader who laying down volume one picks up volume six, we do not know what to anticipate.

The later days of the Roman Byzantine Empire constituted a period of intellectual stagnation. Those virile qualities which had made Rome the master of the world had long since departed and Rome itself by 541 A.D. had become reduced to little more than a provincial city in a Byzantine Empire. While the spirit of Christianity had not yet evolved, the ceremonial of religion was everywhere

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in evidence. Church building became a mania, the acquisition of saintly remains an obsession. Catacombs and graves were plundered by night, and the tombs in churches had to be watched by armed men. Rome, says Gregorovius, was like a mouldering cemetery in which hyenas howled and fought as they dug greedily after corpses. And these corpses and skeletons were labelled with the names of popular saints and sold piecemeal to pilgrims. Many were conducted with the greatest ceremony to remote parts of Europe where they remain objects of sanctity to this day.

At Byzantium where the power of the Empire still flickered feebly, men moved and thought in a sickly atmosphere of decay. In the administration of affairs women and eunuchs were all powerful. In short it appeared impossible that there could ever again issue from this great carcass of an Empire that which was not mean, hypocritical or effete.

The terms in which Gibbon refers to a part may almost be applied to the whole—‘They held in their lifeless hands the riches of their fathers, without inheriting the spirit which had created and improved that sacred patrimony; they read, they praised, they compiled, but their languid souls seemed alike incapable of thought and action.’

Whilst the Empire gradually disintegrated upon the northern shores of the Mediterranean, there appeared in Mecca a new and intensely virile faith which advancing swiftly along the southern sea-board leaped the straits and seized upon the greater part of Spain. It was now nearly two hundred years since Mohammed had died and a feud of hostile races had crystallised into a war of opposing creeds. Christendom for the moment was on the defensive, but the defence was holding good. In the east the walls of Constantinople, the capital of the Empire, had served to check the invaders, in the west the Saracens who passed the Pyrenees under Abdalrahman had been hurled back by ‘the genius and good fortune of Charles Martel’. But it is significant that although Charles Martel, by defeating the Saracens at Tours in 732 had undoubtedly saved Europe, he was none the less considered by the Church

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to be utterly damned because he had dared to use the resources of certain bishops and abbots to pay his soldiers. Thought in Europe had long since lost touch with the realities of life. The history of the past two centuries had been a history of endless disputes upon obscure and ridiculous points of doctrine. Learned men debated unceasingly a thousand conundrums which any child in a nursery would recognise as rubbish. In short there had grown up a decadent, weary and mentally surfeited race in which every layman argued like an ecclesiastic and every bishop intrigued like a prince. All this the Saracens threatened to sweep into the dustbin. Their own creed was no doubt sufficiently extraordinary, but at least it was intelligible. The subtle requirements of lazy or fanatical doctrinaires found no place in a simple faith that permitted a man to fight with joy and to die without misgiving.

Thus the invasion of Sicily by the Saracens, and the subsequent overthrow of the Saracens by the Normans should be viewed less as a war for territory than as a portion of the extensive contest which the Church waged against the Mohammedans. I say 'the Church' advisedly, for the Christian religion in these days was far more an organisation than a faith, just as Mohammedanism was far more a faith than an organisation. In the end Faith was not entirely destroyed—it never is, but organisation, at least in Europe, won the day—it usually does.

For very many years Sicily had played an inconspicuous part upon the European stage. She had for long formed an inconsiderable portion of the Roman Empire, and as the life ebbed from that great organism she herself became more and more enfeebled. She had been misgoverned and plundered. Ambition was dead. The droning of countless monks and priests alone broke the silence. For every man of action there were five parasites of one sort or another.

The appearance of the Saracens in Sicily in A.D. 827 was not altogether a bolt from the blue. For some years their ships had been a familiar sight from the island headlands and their reputation as marauders was firmly established. None the less if not entirely unanticipated it had something

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of the appearance of a chance event. It seems almost to have been the destiny of Sicily to invite her enemies to the island. The Athenians and the Carthaginians had alike appeared at Sicilian instigation, and if the invitation to the Saracens was differently arrived at, it can still be said with accuracy that they came because they were requested to do so.

The Arab historian Ibn ul-Athîr thus explains the matter:—‘The Emperor of the Romans, who lived at Constantinople, Kustuntuniêh, sent in the year A.H. 211, a patrician, Constantine, as governor of Sicily. Constantine appointed a Roman of the name of Fîmi (Euphemius), a brave and wise soldier, to the command of the fleet, and he invaded Ifrîkia,¹ and did great damage to the Moslems. In the meantime Constantine received orders from the Emperor to throw Fîmi into prison and subject him to torture. Fîmi, on hearing this, rose in arms, drove Constantine into Catania and proclaimed himself King of Sicily. War then broke out between Fîmi and his lieutenant, Balâta, who was assisted by Michael, Governor of Palermo. Fîmi suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of Balâta, who made himself master of Syracuse. Fîmi thereupon invoked the assistance of Ziâdatullâh Aghlab, offering him the sovereignty of Sicily.’

Ziâdatullâh Aghlab the ruler of Ifrîkia is described as a prince of great talent and ambition, a distinguished patron of the arts and learning but unfortunately possessed of a haughty and reckless temper. The offer, he thought, had its points. There is of course more than one version of these events. In some accounts Euphemius becomes a rich landholder falsely accused of abducting a pretty nun, by no means a safe form of amusement in the later days of Byzantine rule. He is even said to have proposed that the Arabs should make him King of Sicily in return for a yearly tribute. But in any event it matters very little who he was or what he hoped for. Ased, the Saracen commander, sets sail with a fleet of a hundred ships carrying ten thousand foot soldiers and seven hundred horsemen, and in the shadow of that

¹ An autonomous principality consisting of the northern parts of Africa west of Egypt.

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dark cloud Euphemius is lost to sight. Once afterwards we catch a glimpse of him, at Castrogiovanni where he is killed fighting in the Saracen forces.

The Saracens landed on the south coast, marched eastward and true to precedent, besieged Syracuse, then the capital of the island. History now further repeats itself and the Saracens like the Athenians and the Carthaginians before them, suffer terribly from the unhealthy situation in which they are encamped. But here the parallel ends. Less irresolute than the Athenians and more fortunate than the Carthaginians, the Saracens withdraw in time and proceed to carry into effect the very policy which the unfortunate Nicias had outlined to the defeated Athenians. Retreating inland they threw themselves into Mineo where they took steps to maintain themselves until they should have recovered their strength and assurance. From this stronghold they sallied out and captured Girgenti, but whilst besieging Castrogiovanni they were attacked by the Byzantines and once again driven to shelter. The Saracen garrison in Girgenti retreated to the island of Mazzara. However, the Byzantine forces, although for a time strong enough to confine the Saracens, were unable to drive them from the island. In spite of desperate attacks they maintained themselves in their fortresses, the promise of incalculable events.

It was not to be expected that the contest in Sicily could be fought to a finish without involving the forces that stood at the back of both combatants. Reinforcements reached the Byzantines from Constantinople and the Saracens from Spain and Africa.

The immediate effect of the arrival of Byzantine reinforcements was a determined attack upon Mineo. The Saracens at this moment were reduced to dire straits, and the invasion appeared within an ace of defeat. However, when things were at their worst the reinforcements from Spain and Africa made their appearance, and it was now the turn of the Byzantines to act upon the defensive.

It is difficult to avoid the impression that the invaders were assisted to some considerable extent by the character

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of their opponents. The first Saracen army was comparatively a small one and the Syracusan marshes had killed its commander and taken heavy toll of its numbers. It suffered defeat in the centre of the island and it remained for a time confined to two comparatively weak fortresses. Yet it survives until it is sufficiently strengthened by the advent of new forces to drive its enemy to shelter in Syracuse. Had the Byzantines possessed more of the rash daring that characterised their enemy they would almost certainly have driven the Saracens from Sicily. On the other hand it might be said with equal truth that if the Saracens had owned the discipline and organisation of their opponents they would have overrun all Europe.

Palermo fell to the Saracens in 831, but a period of twenty-eight years intervened before the invaders occupied Castrogiovanni, and even then Syracuse still held out. But the days of Syracuse were numbered. Within its defences, so continually put to the test, so often destroyed, so frequently renewed, the Byzantines held their own until A.D. 878.

The power of the Empire, such as it was, had long been centred in Constantinople. Rome, weak almost to insignificance, had seen the Saracens rifling the cherished if doubtful remains of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, and now witnessed, though possibly with less interest and anxiety, the efforts of Pope Nicholas I, to uphold his temporal power against Louis II, and to assert ecclesiastical authority against the Patriarch of Constantinople. Neither from Constantinople nor Rome could assistance be looked for.

Left to their own resources, with the knowledge that the Saracens had more cruelties to revenge than courtesies to remember, the Byzantines in Syracuse rediscovered something of their ancient valour, and it was only after hard fighting that the besiegers broke through the defence and the last Christian stronghold in Sicily fell to Saracen rule. For our knowledge of the final scenes we are largely indebted to what Gibbon describes as the 'not inelegant complaint' of the deacon Theodosius. Theodosius, as will be seen, escaped the massacre which accounted for the majority of the survivors, and was carried a prisoner to Palermo.

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‘ Such was the slaughter that on the same day every weapon with which defence had been made was broken to pieces, bows, quivers, arms, swords, and all weapons ; the strong were made weak, and the violence of the foe drove to surrender those defenders, those brave men whom I may well call giants, who laboured with all their might, who hesitated not before that day to suffer hunger and all labours, and to be pierced with numberless wounds for the love of Christ, and who were all put to the sword after the city was taken. . . . We were taken captive after we had suffered hunger long, feeding upon herbs, after having thrust into our mouths in our extreme need even filthy things, after men had even devoured their children. . . . We did not abstain from eating leather and the skins of oxen . . . we spared not even dry bones. . . . While the bishop was commending his Church to the Guardian Angel, behold the enemy was suddenly there, with drawn swords wet with blood, and they wandered through the whole building, turning hither and thither ; and one of them departed out of the throng that moved round, and came to the holy altar, and there he found us hiding between the altar and the (bishop’s) chair, and he took us ; yet he did nothing cruel to us, for God had certainly softened his heart a little.

‘ . . . Not long after this we began the journey to Palermo, which we accomplished in the space of six days, borne on beasts bred to carry burdens, but we were conducted by rough and savage Ethiopians. At length, much vexed by the heat in the day time and by the nocturnal chills, and not having ceased to travel by day and night, we entered the extremely famous and populous city of Palermo ; and as we went into the city, the people came out to meet us. They thronged out in great joy, and they sang songs of triumph, and as they saw the victors carrying the spoils into the city we at length saw the multitude of the citizens and of the strangers who had assembled, and that the number of the citizens, as compared with all accounts, had in our opinion not been overrated ; for you would have thought that the whole race of the Saracens had come together there, from the rising up of the sun even to its going down, from

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the north and from the sea, according to the accustomed speech of the most blessed David. Wherefore the people being crowded together in such a press of inhabitants, began to build and inhabit houses without the walls, to such an extent that they really built many cities round the original one, not unequal to it.'

The unhappy Theodosius and his companion the bishop appear to have been confined for some time in a dungeon in Palermo, but it is generally supposed that eventually they were ransomed. In any event they appear to have escaped the calamities of Syracuse with more good fortune than might have been expected. It was not the habit of either side to give quarter, and if the Saracens frequently treated their prisoners with abominable cruelty their Christian opponents were not far behind them in this respect.¹

The epistle of Theodosius makes a fitting conclusion to this brief historical survey since it leaves the Saracens in full possession of the island, Syracuse a ruin and Palermo a great and growing city.

At this point it will be interesting to ask ourselves what kind of people these Saracens really were. The question is the more important since we are apt rather to take it for granted that the Church has always represented civilisation and that the overthrow of its enemies has always been advantageous. That, however, is by no means the case. Like every other great empire, the Saracen carried within itself the seeds of decay. There would appear to be some inevitable law which governs the growth of power and saps the strength of the overgrown, and the Saracen Empire was from the commencement destined to division and decay as surely as any other. At the time of the Saracen occupation of Sicily, however, the process of disruption was only

¹ 'In the national religious conflict of the two Empires peace was without confidence, and war without mercy. . . . Those who escaped the edge of the sword were condemned to hopeless servitude or exquisite torture; and a Catholic Emperor relates with visible satisfaction, the execution of the Saracens of Crete, who were flayed alive, or plunged into cauldrons of boiling oil.'—Gibbon.

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commencing and in the west as well as in the near east the Mohammedans were administering captured territories with ability and generosity. The Christian subjects of the Arabs paid a tribute, but it was not excessive. Commerce and agriculture were encouraged. 'The Arabs might exaggerate the truth,' says Gibbon, 'but they created and they describe the most prosperous era of the riches, the cultivation, and the populousness of Spain.' Odd as it may appear to many, Mohammedanism in its days of power has ever shown a far greater tolerance towards the unbeliever than the Church in its days of authority has extended to the heretic. Throughout the Mohammedan world countries grown sickly under the decadence of the Empire acquired a new and startling prosperity.

For the Saracen of these days represented not merely the character of progress but even the arts of life. A love of poetry, of architecture, of the beautiful in any form was to him a direct inheritance which the opportunities of victory could only stimulate. As a race the Saracens, or more properly the Arabs, reached the zenith of their power and achievements between the eighth and the thirteenth centuries. 'The vast literature which existed during this period,' says Sédillot, 'the multifarious productions of genius, the precious inventions, all of which attest a marvellous activity of intellect, justify the opinion that the Arabs were our masters in everything.'

Under the Ommeyyades, Damascus became one of the most beautiful cities of the world. And the same hands that beautified the city dealt with so practical a matter as the water supply and that so effectively as to make it for many hundreds of years unsurpassed in the east. In this city the Caliph's palace, says Ameer Ali, 'was resplendent with gold and marble; costly mosaics ornamented the floors and walls; and running fountains diffused an agreeable coolness around the courts. The gardens were filled with rare and shady trees and enlivened by innumerable singing birds.'

The Arabs engaged in scientific research, established state hospitals, planted gardens for the study of botany,

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wrote upon grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy, and compiled lexicons and biographies of all kinds. But it is unnecessary to labour the point. We have said sufficient, we think, to make it clear that the people which had now conquered Sicily was something more than a race of wild and ferocious horsemen.

Thus in Sicily, as in Spain, the Saracen occupation opened a new era. The crushing rights of a parasitic population of monks and nobles were swept away; commerce and especially agriculture flourished; art and every form of creative effort awoke from the deadly lethargy of the Roman-Byzantine supremacy.

While the Saracens impressed their culture upon Sicily, the first Norman adventurers entered Italy.

‘The Normans’, says Malaterra, ‘are a cunning and revengeful people; eloquence and dissimulation appear to be their hereditary qualities; they can stoop to flatter; but unless they are curbed by the restraint of law, they indulge the licentiousness of nature and passion . . . they despise whatever they possess, and hope whatever they desire. Arms and horses, the luxury of dress, the exercises of hunting and hawking, are the delight of the Normans; but on pressing occasions they can endure with incredible patience the inclemency of every climate and the toil and abstinence of a military life.’

To this picture it need only be added that they were heavy and extremely powerful men, well mounted and amazingly proficient in the use of arms.

Somewhere about 1018 a body of these adventurers had entered Italy on the invitation of a citizen of Bari who, with their assistance, proposed to throw off the Byzantine yoke. But although the Norman knights performed prodigies of valour, the odds were too heavily against them, and retreating ‘with their faces to the enemy’ they commenced a hazardous existence, cut off from their native land and maintaining themselves in a foreign and hostile country by their own might. The Normans, however, were too formidable and the times too unsettled for such a force not to be in demand in one quarter or another, and for a

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time the adventurers espoused any cause prepared to recognise the value of their assistance at its proper figure. Between times they raided the countryside and carried off here a woman, there a few horses, and everywhere the requirements of their larder. Thus they flourished, the Norman Doones of an Italian Exmoor, until the Duke of Naples was led to present them with a city of their own, the town of Aversa, twelve miles north of Naples.

To the adventurous sons of the Norman nobles the life of their brethren in Italy possessed a romance all its own. Families were frequently large and the paternal income not infrequently inconsiderable, and Aversa soon became the Mecca of every young Norman who was impatient of ease and ambitious of glory. Some appeared frankly as knights with a few retainers, but many crossed the Alps alone and in the garb of a pilgrim.

To these knights a formidable force of outlaws and fugitives of every kind was attracted from the country round about, and the independent banner flying above Aversa soon marked a veritable hornet's nest—but the hornets were of iron and their sting was most frequently fatal.

The weakness of the Saracens had always consisted in the feuds and jealousies which divided them, and this weakness became more and more accentuated as time went on. Thus in A.D. 1038 the Byzantines, who had always regretted the loss of Sicily were moved to attempt its recapture. For this purpose a force was landed in the island under command of Maniaces who very prudently had engaged five hundred of the Normans to assist him. Once again Syracuse stood a siege and submitted to capture. Indeed all went well with the expedition until there arose the duty of dividing the spoil when the Byzantine had the better of the Norman. This was not the sort of misunderstanding with which the northern adventurers had any sympathy. They protested through an interpreter—and the interpreter was dismissed with a scourging. Thoroughly enraged, the Normans returned to the mainland where with their brethren of Aversa they waged war upon the local Byzantine forces. Maniaces was shortly afterwards

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recalled and the troops of the Eastern Empire withdrew from Sicily for the last time, the expedition having yielded precisely nothing.

For the next few years Sicily remains in possession of the Saracens, but upon the mainland the Normans steadily extend their influence so that eventually we find that they have virtually established a new state. The Normans now split themselves into twelve districts, each of which rendered allegiance to its own Count, who was elected from amongst his fellows on the score of birth and merit. The town of Melphi, situated in the centre of their territory, was recognised as the citadel of the new state, and William of the Iron Arm was made Count of Apulia, a title which conferred upon its holder seniority of rank and command amongst his fellows, but which was far from making him a despotic ruler.

For some years the Normans maintained their kingdom by the same resolute methods with which they had secured it. William of the Iron Arm had died, and although under his brother and successor Drogo the twelve counts were not always in agreement, a serious menace invariable found them united to the destruction of their enemies. Thus matters progressed until the Byzantine Court developed the ingenious idea of persuading the Normans to emigrate to Persia. There was, it must be admitted, much to be said for the suggestion from the Byzantine standpoint. As allies in their Persian wars, the Normans would prove invaluable, as an independent state in Southern Italy they were merely a menace and a nuisance. However, the Normans would have none of it. They accepted the bribes and refused to budge. Furious at his ill success, the Greek negotiator now contemplated their complete overthrow and a curious alliance was constituted to that end, consisting of the Franconian Emperor Henry III, Pope Leo IX, and the Byzantine Emperor Constantine. The alliance was not so strong as it sounded. Henry was too feeble, the Pope too simple, and Constantine too busy. Thus although Drogo and a number of his knights were murdered in a church, the Normans on the field of battle under the leadership of Humphrey, the third Count of Apulia, cut to ribbons a

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German army greatly superior in numbers and captured the Pope.

The Normans with a Pope on their hands were at first a trifle embarrassed. Fortunately it occurred to one of them that if they made their prisoner comparatively comfortable he might be induced to absolve them from the sin of making him a prisoner at all. And a deal was happily concluded upon these terms, the Pope being guaranteed certain comforts in this world against his undertaking that the Normans should not be unduly penalised in the next. An understanding at once so logical and so convenient opened the way to further negotiations and eventually an agreement was reached between the Pope and the Normans, which was to be extremely useful to both parties.

The three first Counts of Apulia, William of the Iron Arm, Drogo, and Humphrey, were the three eldest sons of Tancred of Hauteville, a nobleman of lower Normandy. There were twelve sons of this family and in all of them the adventurous strain was highly developed. Robert Guiscard, who jointly with his younger brother Roger, was to wrest Sicily from the Saracens, was the sixth son of Tancred and the eldest son of his mother, for Tancred had married twice. If we may credit the accounts of this hero which have been handed down to us, Robert would appear to have been the ideal figure of his time. He was tall but splendidly proportioned, extremely strong but equally agile, as a fighter he was almost without a peer, and finally, his brains were as highly developed as his muscles. Gibbon remarks of him: 'His boundless ambition was founded on the consciousness of superior worth; in the pursuit of greatness he was never arrested by the scruples of justice, and seldom moved by the feelings of humanity; though not insensible of fame, the choice of open or clandestine means was determined only by his present advantage.' In short, an extremely formidable person and one who entirely merited the surname of Guiscard—an adroit man—which the writers of his time bestowed on him.

Robert is said to have entered Italy, some years after his elder brothers, more or less disguised as a pilgrim. By this

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time there was little or no land in Apulia that was not already taken up, and the young adventurer necessarily pushed southward to the mountains of Calabria. It does not appear that he always saw eye to eye with his half brothers, the first three Counts of Apulia, but on the death of Humphrey he secured the succession, and as the fourth Count this extraordinary son of an extraordinary family was soon in a position to give rein to his ambitions. He appears to have had some quarrel with the Pope ; but the Papacy valued the strong arm of the Normans as highly as the Normans valued the authority of the Church, and he was soon enabled to term himself, with Papal authority, Duke of Apulia, Calabria and all territories in Italy and Sicily which he might redeem from unbelieving Saracens, and schismatic Greeks. In truth the Normans and the Church ran very well in double harness.

The position of Robert Guiscard at this time is not without interest. His power was at once so much greater and so much less than it should have been. As the ally of the Pope, divinely charged to wrest lands from the infidel, it seemed that he might aspire to anything. But in sober fact he was not even the ruler of a state. Except in such titles as he chose to assume, he was still no more than Count of Apulia, the first amongst equals. The loyalty the Normans owed to him was a useful plant but a young one. Its roots went no farther back than the days of the first Count. He could invoke no claim to legitimate and long established sovereignty. Nor were these the only disadvantages of his position. The sons of Humphrey had not forgiven him the fact that he had seized their father's office when they were too youthful to maintain a more legitimate claim ; and the twelve counts by whose votes the affairs of the State were regulated, were too nearly his equal to be entirely enthusiastic or even quite disinterested when he proposed that they should fight for his greater glory. None the less Robert continued to term himself, ' By the Grace of God and St. Peter, Duke of Apulia, Calabria, and hereafter of Sicily ', and had no sort of doubt that the future would make good the boast.

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Roger, the youngest of the brothers and the last to reach Italy, found the Norman state well established. In person and in courage he was in no way inferior to the other members of his family, and without loss of time he immersed himself in the contests with which his relatives filled their days. For to this amazing family a feud of some sort was so much a necessity, that when everything else failed they would raid each other's estates. In such an atmosphere Roger was entirely at home, indeed he did so well that Robert Guiscard ceased to send him money with which to pay his troops. At this Roger, true to the family instincts, approached his brother William of Salerno who, to satisfy a grudge of his own, presented him with a castle from which he could raid Robert's lands with a maximum of convenience. This brought Robert into the fray in sober earnest and there is soon something like a small war in which Robert besieges Roger and is attacked whilst so occupied by William. However, Robert Guiscard was something more than a free-booting baron, and by 1060 he had more or less consolidated his position.

After many vicissitudes Roger had settled himself to enjoy a position of semi-independence in the city of Mileto in Calabria when he was approached by three merchants of Messina who begged him to free their city from Saracen rule. Roger was by no means loth to make the effort, and, taking sixty knights with him, he effected a landing in Sicily, only, however, to find himself opposed to an army of considerable strength. In this extremity the prowess of the Normans was abundantly displayed. Feigning flight, the knights rode off, only, however, on a sign from their leader to turn and hurl their pursuers to the ground. The Saracens, no longer in a compact body, could do nothing with these men of iron and in the end the host took to flight, utterly vanquished by a force numerically beneath contempt. But Roger had had his lesson. The Christian rising on which he had fondly counted had nowhere evinced itself and he returned home with his handful of men, a wiser but improbably a sadder man.

Roger and Robert Guiscard united their forces to withstand

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a Byzantine attack upon the mainland but, this danger surmounted, the thoughts of the brothers again turned to Sicily. Robert was still in name 'By the Grace of God and St. Peter, Duke hereafter of Sicily'; Roger had visited the island once and was inclined to think that he might with advantage visit it again. A feud between two Saracen chiefs afforded the desired opportunity. Roger landed to the west of Messina and, though he was eventually driven back to his ships, his achievements were such that Robert Guiscard definitely committed himself to the task of restoring the island to Christian rule.

The next few years are taken up with constant fighting within Sicily. Neither Roger nor Robert remained continually within the island, but the campaign to wrest Sicily from Saracen rule continued more or less without intermission. The ancient chronicles are full of the bravery and daring deeds of the Normans, and there is no doubt these tributes were well earned. But it should not be forgotten that the Saracens never fought as a united race, a fact which weakened their efforts in the field, but greatly assisted the country to settle down when Norman rule was definitely established. It is amusing to note that the appearance of the Celestial Bowmen at Mons found a precedent at the battle of Ceramio in 1063, when a hundred and thirty-six Christian soldiers are said to have vanquished fifty thousand Saracens. For St. George himself, so it appears, rode before the Christians on a white horse on this occasion. It was not generally stated that the Celestial Bowmen actually shot any Germans with their bows and arrows, but it must have been the case, we think, that St. George transfixed a number of Saracens with his lance. In no other circumstances could the victory have been secured—unless, of course, the figures are exaggerated.

It is difficult to estimate the importance which the two brothers attached to the conquest of Sicily. Until Roger takes up his residence in Calabria where he has the island constantly within sight, there is nothing that leads us to anticipate an early attempt upon it. Robert Guiscard was fully occupied upon the mainland, and although he had

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brought Sicily within his title we doubt whether, left to himself, he would ever have found the time to campaign there. It is Roger, we think, who brings matters to a head. Robert appears from time to time. His strong arm and powerful support are distinctly factors in the achievement of the victory, but before the island is wholly won Robert has died, and he dies not in Sicily, but campaigning against the Eastern Empire, on the farther shores of the Adriatic. The character of Robert was to be reproduced in many important respects about a hundred years later in that of our own national hero Richard Cœur-de-Lion.

Roger was as bold as Robert but in some respects more practical. We do not suggest that he was ever in a position to teach his brother anything in the way of fighting, but Roger, we think, always formed a just estimate of the value of his goal, whereas to Robert the goal was everything even if it were of tinsel. It is possibly a just estimate of the position, in view of the comparatively small number of the Normans in Italy and the nature and extent of the dangers that menaced them, that Robert Guiscard would never have found the opportunity to conquer Sicily if Roger had not been at hand to devote the greater part of his time and energy to the task. On the other hand Roger was never in such authority amongst the Normans that he could have attempted the conquest alone. Even as things were, there were many Norman leaders who declined a part in the effort.

Palermo fell to the united forces of the two brothers in January, 1072. By this date Robert Guiscard had a fleet at his back and the command of the sea, coupled with the extraordinary prowess of Robert and Roger and their Norman forces, was altogether too much for the Saracens, assisted though they were by forces from the African coast. Robert Guiscard encamped his army near the mouth of the Oreto to the east of the city, Roger held the high ground about Monreale. It was Robert's custom when conducting a siege to lay waste the countryside, and at Palermo once again famine helped the besiegers. In the end, after many fierce but unsuccessful attacks, Robert

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gained the outer city while Roger, by previous arrangement, enticed the defenders to meet a sham attack upon another part of the defences. On the following day the Saracens entered the Norman camp to secure the best terms they could.

The undoubted success which attended Norman rule in Sicily may be ascribed to the fact that the Norman leaders at the time of the invasion had passed their years so continuously in fighting that they had never had the opportunity to become bigots in any other direction. To these men the Church was a valued ally, rather than an exacting master ; art was a delight, rather than a creed ; life itself was an opportunity, rather than a duty. Thus the capture of Palermo is singularly free from rigid and harsh consequences. The Saracens are permitted to remain in the city, they are guaranteed against new and unjust laws, they are permitted the full exercise of their religion and their tribunals are allowed to function as though no change of dominion had taken place.

It would be interesting to know the precise state of the Christian Church in Sicily at this time. Unhappily our information upon this point is extremely vague and uncertain. It appears probable that throughout the Saracen regime the Church remained, at least in name, under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople, the rites of the Greek Church being those practised. However, the advent of the Normans substituted the authority of the Roman Pontiff for that of the Patriarch, a fact which goes far to explain the interest which succeeding Popes never failed to exhibit in the fortunes of the island.

During the Saracen regime the tie with Constantinople must have been of the slightest. The Arabs offered little or no opposition when it was proposed to keep existing churches in repair, but the building of new churches was prohibited. Thus the Church did not cease to function, although, under an alien government and far removed from the seat of ecclesiastical authority, it is only to be anticipated that it tended to develop an entity of its own.

It is said that only about six monasteries remained at the

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time of the Norman conquest. On the other hand, the monks petitioned the Normans for a renewal of the Charter granted them by the Saracen invaders, a fact which certainly suggests that its terms were not entirely unsatisfactory. The tendency of the Saracens was to transform the churches into mosques; so that even in Saracen times the churches must have presented a curious blending of Christian and Mohammedan influence, a feature which was considerably enhanced when, after the Norman conquest, the mosques were once again converted to churches.

When the Normans took Palermo they found the Christian community presided over by Nicodemus who bore the title of Archbishop. How this individual came to be an Archbishop in the first instance and how he managed to retain his title during Saracen rule, we cannot say. He appears, however, to have been recognised by Roger and Robert, and to have officiated at a Thanksgiving Service which they held subsequent to the capture of Palermo. At this time there was more than one claimant to the title of Archbishop of Palermo, for in addition to Nicodemus a certain Humbert of Loraine had been granted the dignity by Leo IX. The Normans, however, nominated their own Archbishop, as appears to have been their almost invariable practice, and this fact accounts for the appointment of an Englishman, Walter of the Mill, the builder of Palermo Cathedral.

The capture of Palermo did not mark the end of Saracen resistance. The Saracens were in any event too disunited to admit of collective defeat. There were Saracens, we must remember, who had supported Roger from the day of his first landing, and there were cities which as yet had taken no part in the war either on one side or the other. There were also cities such as Taormina, Trapani and Castrogiovanni, three fortresses of undoubted strength, which remained for some time unconquered Moslem strongholds and centres of resistance. The fact was, Robert, when leaving for his Eastern campaign had taken many of the Norman knights with him, and Roger's authority for some time was limited to the northern part of the island. However, Roger, who from the capture of Palermo



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onwards is known as Count of Sicily, and often referred to as the Great Count, gradually brought the whole island under his sway, capturing one Moslem stronghold after another until in 1091, Noto, the last Saracen centre to hold out, finally capitulated.

The record of Norman rule in Sicily during the years that intervene before Count Roger II is crowned as King of Sicily, may be dismissed very briefly. Roger, although in full possession of Sicily, was no more a monarch than his brother Robert, but except in title, the rank had nothing to offer him. He marries one daughter to a King of Hungary, a second to a King of Rome, and is sufficiently well established to refuse the request of a King of France who desires to marry a third. He holds his estates on the mainland by force of arms and captures Malta, but the Crusades with their curious blending of disinterestedness, fanaticism and dishonesty make no appeal to him. Ultimately in 1101, he dies, by no means the least interesting member of one of the most astonishing families in all history.

On the death of the Great Count his two legitimate sons, Simon and Roger, were aged eight and six years respectively. Simon died in 1105 and the youthful Roger assumed the succession. For some years, as is only to be expected, we hear nothing of him, but as he attains the dignity of manhood he begins to exhibit unmistakable signs of Tancred blood. He covets Palermo which had been retained by Robert for the elder branch of the family, he defies the treaties that limit the extent of his territories in Calabria, and to box the compass, on the death of his cousin William of Apulia, he sets sail for Salerno where he commands the assembled barons to submission. Finally he captures Capua and Naples, and thus steps into the sole inheritance of the Norman conquests. The Pope, Honorius II, was far from witnessing these activities with satisfaction, but Roger came of a family that had more than once dealt with Popes, and Honorius in the end submitted. Thus by 1130 Roger is able at a great Council in Palermo to assume the title King of Sicily. There remained, however, one more difficulty. The church in Rome had been the scene of intrigue and

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upheaval, and Innocent II, who had succeeded Honorius II, had fled for safety to France, leaving the so-called Antipope Anacletus in the seat of Papal Authority. Thus it happened that the papal legate who officiated at the coronation was the representative of the Antipope and the entire ceremony was regarded as void by the faithful. Three years later the Lateran Council declared for Innocent II and annulled the acts of Anacletus. This might have been an unfortunate development for the new King of Sicily had he not most opportunely captured the real pope shortly afterwards. History now repeated itself, and after mutual courtesies the victor received papal recognition as King of Sicily, Duke of Apulia and Prince of Capua. In the Church of La Martorana at Palermo a remarkable mosaic depicts the King as receiving his crown from Christ. If it was not Roger himself who caused this mosaic to be executed, at least it was the work of a courtier who desired to please him, and probably we shall not be far wrong if we see in it an assertion of a claim based upon facts rather than papal authority. Indeed, the facts were all upon his side, and as the son of Count Roger and the nephew of Robert Guiscard he knew how to make them tell.

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